

# SECRET SERVICE

## OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

*Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.*

No. 4.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 17, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

### THE BRADY'S GREAT BLUFF; — OR —

### A BUNCO GAME THAT FAILED TO WORK. BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.



Like human wolves the thugs sprang upon the old detective. Death seemed certain, but at that moment Young King Brady, drawing his revolver, dashed madly to his assistance.

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# The Bradys' Great Bluff;

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## A BUNCO GAME THAT FAILED TO WORK.

AN ENTRANCING DETECTIVE NARRATIVE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE BUNCO GAME.

The chief of the Secret Service was at his wits' ends. Some time past a great variety of criminal cases had come under his eye and he had flattered himself upon his success in their handling.

But now there had drifted into the Central Office the files of the most remarkable and perplexing bunco case the chief had encountered for years.

Mr. Anthony Moore was a wealthy and philanthropic man of Harlem.

He had offices in Cedar street and did a small but secure banking business.

Regularly every day Mr. Moore went to and from his office. Sometimes there was business to do and oftener there had not a visitor all day.

But this never disturbed Mr. Moore.

He was well provided for financially and the matter of lack of business was of small moment to him.

He kept his office more in deference to habit and long custom than ought else.

Now, Mr. Moore was one of those good souls, of whom there are none too many in this world, who delight in philanthropic deeds.

One day, in reading his morning paper, he came to a familiar advertisement.

Thus it read:

Wanted—By a deserving widow lady in extreme circumstances, a customer for six shares of stock of the Far West Gas Company of Smartville, Wisconsin. Stock pays

an annual dividend of 10 per cent. Must have money to pay undertaker's bill for burying my husband. Will sacrifice. Intending purchaser please call at Mrs. Carter's flat, No. — East Thirtieth street."

Now Mr. Moore read this advertisement through several times.

Then he wiped his eyeglasses.

"Hum!" he exclaimed; "that is a hard case. I believe there is a chance for a man to do a charitable deed."

The oftener he glanced at the advertisement the warmer grew his philanthropic heart. He sat back and dreamily drew a mental picture of it all.

He saw Mrs. Carter, the bereaved widow, in her flat in East Thirtieth street.

No doubt she was of fine figure, with a fair, kindly face and sorrowful eyes, in which moisture perpetually stood for the sacred memory of her dead liege lord.

Now, if ever man could boast that the milk of human kindness flowed in his veins that man was Anthony Moore.

"Sacrifice the shares of stock paying the munificent sum of 10 per cent. annually to secure money to pay her dead husband's funeral expenses. Hum!" exclaimed Mr. Moore. "That is sad—sad indeed! A very deserving case. Some good man of charitable propensities should call on this poor woman and either loan her the money to save her stock or purchase it of her at a good figure.

"We are not sufficiently observing of the needs of our worthy poor. It is all right to endow foreign missions, but here is a case right at home which would seem to be far more worthy of patronage. I—I believe I'll look into the matter. Sammy, my hat and cane."

"All right, sir."

The office boy leaped with alacrity to find Mr. Moore's hat and walking stick.

A few moments later the good banker was stumping down Cedar street on his way to the L station.

Up town he rode and alighted at the nearest station to Thirtieth street. Then he walked down that street until he came to the number he sought.

The flat house was one of the humble and not overclean sort found on the east side.

Entering the vestibule, Mr. Moore saw that Mrs. Carter's flat was on the street floor. He pressed the bell.

At once the hall door opened and he walked in.

The door of the first apartment opened, showing an humble parlor. A lady stood in the doorway.

It seemed as if Mr. Moore's picture had found verification. Mrs. Carter was a mild featured, benign looking lady of past middle age.

She wore a veil of crape twined some way about her white hair in the shape of a becoming widow's cap.

Gold bowed eyeglasses rested on her Greek nose. She smiled and courtesied and said:

"Do you wish to see Mrs. Carter?"

"Y-yes," stammered Mr. Moore, who was always a trifle bashful in the presence of a lady. "Are you the lady?"

"I am," she replied in a flute-like voice. "Pray walk in."

Mr. Moore stepped into the flat.

He gave a start as he saw that there was another occupant.

This was a man of benign appearance, with a patrician air and a gold-headed cane. He was in fact of Mr. Moore's own type.

And now we come to the interesting part of the story, which the writer, as historian, will give in as succinct and credible form as possible.

Upon the entrance of Mr. Moore the first visitor arose and stood in a questioning manner.

Mrs. Carter looked from one to the other, upon which Mr. Moore, seeing what was wanted, said:

"My name is Anthony Moore."

"And mine is William Aston," said the first visitor. "I was impelled to come here upon seeing Mrs. Carter's advertisement in the newspaper desiring to sacrifice her Far West Gas stock."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Moore, with unconcealed pleasure. "I came for the same purpose."

"I have made her a very liberal offer," declared Aston. "I know the Smartville company well, and that it is bed rock."

"Mr. Aston is very, very kind to take so much interest in the troubles of a much bereaved woman," said Mrs. Carter.

"Ah, no doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Moore quickly. "I trust he has left some little field for me. I am not behind-hand in the matter of deserving philanthropy, as most any one in New York can tell you."

"I recognize your shining light, Mr. Moore," declared Mr. Aston with a laugh. "I have heard of you before. Your track has crossed mine. Now I propose that we compete in this matter."

"With pleasure," agreed Mr. Moore. "What stock, Mrs. Carter?"

"Here, sir!"

The widow took from a table the little packets of certificates. He examined them critically.

So far as he could see they were all regular and countersigned by the actuary and secret Smartville company.

"All right," said Mr. Moore. "I will take the par value, which I see is four hundred dollars."

"Humph!" said Mr. Aston. "I have offered of fifty dollars per share."

"Then I offer one hundred premium!"

"Oh, gentlemen!" cried Mrs. Carter, "your do not deserve."

"Silence, madam!" said Mr. Moore. "What Mr. Aston?"

"W-well," stammered the other philanthropist, "a richer man than I am, Moore. I can allow the stock and give my premium gratis."

"I will not consent to that," cried the banker. "The other must own the stock."

"Well, I will give one hundred and fifty premium."

"Two hundred!"

"Whew! You beat me!"

Mr. Moore pulled out his check book in triumph. Now Aston said:

"Wait a moment. I have an idea."

"Well?" asked Mr. Moore.

"Moore, you are a man who loves to do charity. Well, I may say that I am the same. We shall reward some day."

"Certainly."

"Now I have a plan."

"Name it."

"A plan whereby we can put this lady forever free of the demand of want."

"I shall be glad to know it."

"I own stock in this gas company already," said Aston. "I have sixty thousand dollars' worth of the best holding I have. I will place these shares in your hands. I know where I can purchase another sixty thousand shares. You have my shares of stock. Give me your shares for sixty thousand and I will purchase the shares for one hundred and twenty thousand in all. This deposit in your bank as a joint fund, the income shall be payable to Mrs. Carter for ten years. This will not hurt you or I and fix her all right."

Mr. Moore thought a moment.

What could be straighter? He did not hesitate. There could be no risk.

Did he not have the shares of Mr. Aston's to check? Moreover, the fund was to find deposit in his bank. This was enough.

"It is a bargain, Aston," he cried. "I will not be done!"

And he wrote the check.

Sixty thousand dollars!

He received the stock certificates.

Mr. Aston was very polite.

Mrs. Carter was tearful and profuse.

She even embraced Mr. Moore in the effusiveness of her gratitude. Mr. Moore was quite flustered.

Mr. Moore went home and slept that night as he had not slept for many nights.

Poor old soul! What a pity that human kindness should be so miserably requited.

Several days passed.

Mr. Aston did not come to Mr. Moore's office. Then Mr. Moore, out of curiosity, began to look up the stock of the Far West Company.

The longer he searched the less trace he found of it. A most astounding discovery was made.

No such company was in existence.

Smartville was a bogus town.

The flat occupied by Mrs. Carter was found empty. The birds had flown.

Mr. Moore had been buncoed.

The good, kind old gentleman had been made the victim of a parcel of sharpers.

For a time it was hard for him to realize this fact.

But when he found that his check, given to William Aston, had been cashed and he was really out sixty thousand dollars, there was a revulsion of sentiment.

Mr. Moore was chagrined.

But he was a plucky and resolute old man. He was determined that the perpetrators of the fraud should be punished.

So he went to the office of the chief of the Secret Service and told his story.

The chief listened in sympathy. Then he put detectives on the track of the swindlers. Weeks passed, but nothing came of it.

Mr. Moore became impatient.

He had offered a handsome reward.

But the Secret Service chief was at his wits' ends. No plan that he put forward seemed to succeed.

Thus matters were when one day the office door opened.

Two men walked in.

They were of remarkable appearance, and at sight of them the chief gave an exclamation of joy.

## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE SCENT.

"Just the men I want to see!" he cried. "I thought the two Bradys were but memories of the past. I have not seen them in so long a time."

The younger of the two men laughed.

"Blame Old King Brady for that," he cried. "He would not be here now but for me."

"Tut, tut, Harry!" rejoined Old King Brady curtly. "You know that I have come here without any suggestion from you. I visit this office only when I have business here."

"Then I take it such is the case!" cried the chief. "But your coming is opportune, for I have business with you also."

"Ah!" exclaimed the elder detective. "I think I can guess it!"

"What is it, then?"

"A bunco case!"

The chief was astonished.

"That is true!" he cried. "How did you know it?"

The old detective smiled.

Sitting back in the chair he was seen to rare advantage. A more remarkable man did not walk the streets of New York. It was easy to single him out of a crowd, no matter how large.

Tall, but strongly built, he was a pattern of robust manhood, despite his years.

He wore the same blue coat, tightly buttoned up to the stock collar, the same broad-brimmed white felt hat, beneath which his keen eyes gleamed.

For many years Old King Brady had been the terror of the evildoer in Gotham.

Hitherto he had always been alone in his wonderful exploits.

But now he had a companion, a protege as it were, who was of the same name, yet no blood relation.

Harry Brady was a fine type of young manhood. He had made warm friends with Old King Brady, and, as it was the young man's dearest wish to become a detective, he had been taken in hand by Old King Brady.

Wherever the old detective went the younger followed.

Harry Brady was quick and keen and astute and became a ready pupil.

It was not long before he had imbibed so much of the old detective's methods that he was scarcely inferior.

Old King Brady secretly recognized this and was pleased.

He took great pains to initiate Harry into all the secrets of the art, and Harry was apt.

It was not long before the crooks began to know and fear him, and he earned the patronymic of Young King Brady.

All over the country they were known as the Two Bradys. They were a great team.

Their methods differed vastly from those of other detectives.

Indeed it was difficult for the sharpest crooks to fathom these. At times the two keen detectives dropped from sight entirely, and when they reappeared their case was solved.

Old King Brady never failed.

The most baffling case, the most intricate mystery, never phased him. He was bound to solve it.

So it can be readily imagined that the chief was overjoyed to see these two remarkable sleuths enter his office.

He at once decided to put them onto the bunco case.

But to his keen amazement he found that they were already aware of it.

"Well," said Old King Brady; "it happens that the Artful Trio have been included in our list of eligible victims for a long time. Their treatment of Mr. Moore is only one out of many hundred similar cases."

"The Artful Trio!"

"Exactly."

"That is what you call them?"

"Yes."

"But Mr. Moore mentioned only a man and a woman."

"In his case it was not necessary to call in the third ally. The victim was too easy."

"Which is flattering to Mr. Moore," said Young King Brady with a laugh.

"Flattering or not, it is true," declared the chief. "Mr. Moore was an easy victim. Then you are familiar with the details?"

"So is everybody who reads the papers."

"True enough. But may I ask have you been subserving Mr. Moore's interests?"

"No more his than others," replied Old King Brady.

"There are a dozen people looking for the Artful Trio."

"Have you seen Mr. Moore?"

"No."

The chief was puzzled.

"How then did you happen to undertake the case?" he asked.

"As I said a moment ago," replied Old King Brady, "the Artful Trio were on our list, and, running across them, we have shadowed them quite a good deal of late."

"I understand. It is therefore unnecessary for me to post you on the case. You understand Mr. Moore offers a large reward for the villains?"

"Yes."

"I trust you will succeed in ferreting out the gang. There is no doubt but that they are the shrewdest and most dangerous bunco gang ever known in this country."

Old King Brady nodded.

"That is true," he said.

"How do you propose to go to work at first?" asked the chief.

The two Bradys shot surprised glances at each other.

"Pardon me," said the chief with a smile. "I will withdraw that question. But I wish you would report to me at intervals the progress you are making."

"We will report the quickest way when we get our birds," replied Old King Brady.

Then the subject was changed.

The two detectives chatted a while and reviewed some former business, and then the Bradys shook hands with the chief and went out.

The latter drew a deep breath.

"It's all up with the bunco gang now," he muttered confidently. "I would stake all I am worth that the two Bradys will drive them to the wall. Mr. Moore will at least get his revenge."

When Old King Brady and his young protege reached the street they walked as far as Broadway and boarded an up town car.

At Madison square they alighted and walked over to Fourth avenue.

Here they got upon a cable car, which took them through the tunnel to the Grand Central station.

They walked into the station, where incoming trains

were bulletined. The elder detective looked at the bulletin.

"Chicago express due at four-thirty," he said. "O time. That is our train, Harry. He will be on it!"

"We have forty minutes to wait," said Young King Brady.

"Just so, my lad."

"You think Ann and Corcoran will be here to meet him?"

"Did not the dispatch indicate it?"

Young King Brady drew a telegram from his pocket. It had been once torn to bits, but now was complete having been pasted in sections upon a whole sheet of paper.

The detectives glanced over it.

Thus it read:

"Con Corcoran, No. — Forty-fourth street:

"Will be in New York to-day. Meet me at four-thirty Chicago train. Important business.

"SIMEON HARDY."

The two detectives had found this dispatch immediately after it had been received and torn in pieces that very morning by Con Corcoran.

Con Corcoran was one of the Artful Trio of bunco players. Ann Prentiss, the craftiest woman in criminal New York, was another, and Simeon Hardy was the third.

According to the telegram, Hardy was due in New York from Chicago at four-thirty.

Corcoran was to meet him at the depot. This explained why the two detectives were there.

The two Bradys kept in the shadows as much as possible and critically surveyed everybody who entered the depot.

It was not long before Old King Brady clutched the younger detective's arm and whispered:

"There he is!"

A tall, finely dressed man entered the depot.

He was attired in an immaculate Prince Albert coat with black tie, light trousers and patent leather shoes.

He wore a silk hat, nicely polished, and his side whiskers and nicely combed hair gave him the appearance of a clerical gentleman.

Nobody would have selected him for a crook or a dangerous bunco man.

Yet New York City held no more dangerous criminal. His very appearance of respectability inveighed in his favor and enabled him to defy the law.

Con Corcoran was an adept in his profession.

His victims were numbered by the hundred. Rich were his gains, and he was the ringleader of many a villainous gang.

The two detectives watched him attentively. They knew, however, that he was not identical with the Mr. Aston who participated in the buncoing of Mr. Moore.

This was Sim Hardy, an older man and of a different type, and the individual whom he was to meet on the Chicago train.

The time was at hand for the arrival of the train.

But it required some few minutes to back the cars down

into the station. Then a great crowd of travelers came up the platform.

Among them was one who gave Con Corcoran a signal. It was Sim Hardy.

A clever bunco steerer he was, and known from New York to California as a thoroughbred crook.

Hardy was short and rather stout, with smooth, bland features, and dressed as a retired merchant or banker.

Like Corcoran, he would never have been selected from a crowd as a man of dangerous proclivities.

The two bunco steerers met and shook hands warmly.

Then they walked out of the depot and down Forty-second street.

The detectives followed them.

While they walked they seemed to be engaged in most earnest conversation. Not a word of this, however, could reach the detectives.

When they reached Second avenue the bunco men turned and proceeded as far as Forty-fourth street.

Along this thoroughfare they went, and then a curious thing happened.

They disappeared.

One moment the detectives had their gaze full upon them. The next instant they were not to be seen.

It was a most unexpected and astonishing incident. For a while the Bradys were at a loss what to do.

"Jupiter!" exclaimed Young King Brady. "Where in the world did they go to?"

"Easy," said the old detective. "Step this way."

Into a basement doorway the detective drew his companion. It was an unoccupied house.

So, while in the deeply cut doorway they were not easily seen from the street, Old King Brady then proceeded to carry out precautionary plans.

### CHAPTER III.

#### IN THE FORTY-FOURTH STREET HOUSE.

The precautionary plans were simply the changing of personal appearance.

This was done in a skilful manner.

The two Bradys were masters in the art of disguise.

Old King Brady produced a soft woolen cap in the place of his broad-brim hat. A wig and a mustache, with a pair of goggles, completely disguised him.

Young King Brady slipped on a Vandyke beard and a blond wig.

Thus made up, the two detectives sallied forth.

In a few moments they had reached the spot where the two bunco steerers had been last seen.

They did not stop, but passing slowly and carelessly by, Old King Brady took in everything in the vicinity with his keen gaze.

At the next street corner he stopped.

For a moment he looked back up the street. Then he said:

"Harry, they are in that house with the high stoop entrance.

The young detective looked surprised.

"How do you make that out?" he asked.

"Easy enough. They disappeared suddenly. It is the only house along there with a deep basement entrance save the unoccupied house.

"The gate was open and they dodged into that entrance. The blinds of that house are closely drawn, not only to give the impression that the owners are away, but to forbid visitors also.

"They evidently went in by the basement entrance. I imagine this is the permanent home of the woman, Ann Prentiss. They are all there."

Young King Brady saw that there was logic in Old King Brady's deductions. He glanced at the old detective admiringly.

"I am glad I am not a criminal," he said, "and pursued by you. I should count my days numbered."

"We must go back to the unoccupied house," said Old King Brady.

"Why there?"

"I will tell you when we get there. You go now and I will come along later."

Young King Brady obeyed.

He sauntered leisurely back to the unoccupied house. He ensconced himself in the basement entrance.

It was not long before the old detective joined him.

There was a satisfied smile on Old King Brady's lips.

"We are not suspected," he said confidently. "The coast is clear!"

"I am glad of that," agreed the young detective; "but what is our game now?"

Old King Brady tried the basement door. It was locked.

He drew a peculiar shaped wire from his pocket. Then he examined the lock.

In a few seconds he had very cleverly picked the lock. The door swung open. The detectives entered the basement of the unoccupied house.

They ascended the stairs to the first floor. Fortunately all the inner doors were unlocked.

Without difficulty they made their way to the upper stories of the house. Old King Brady kept on until he reached the attic.

Here was a skylight which opened onto the roof.

The old detective raised this and went out onto the housetop. Young King Brady followed him.

To the roof of the next house they easily proceeded and so on until they reached the roof of the house in which the old detective believed the bunco steerers to be.

It was then a easy matter to raise the skylight on that roof. Narrow steps led down into the garret.

The detectives now drew from their pockets rubber noiseless soles. These they applied to their shoes.

This made it possible for them to descend noiselessly, which they proceeded to do.

From the garret they descended to the fourth floor of the house.

This was unfurnished.

The next stairs were carpeted and the third floor was well furnished. But nobody was in any of the rooms, which were plainly sleeping chambers.

To the second floor they crept. Then voices were heard. They came from a rear room on the first floor.

Old King Brady had noticed one important thing. The chambers were not heated save by openings in the floor of each room, which allowed the heat to ascend from the first floor.

In each room was one of the metal cylinders and gratings set in the floor. It was to this fact that the detectives owed the overhearing of some very important facts.

Old King Brady, having noted this fact, first located the room from which the voices came on the first floor. It was a rear room and very likely the dining room.

He then examined the room over this. As he expected, there was a cylinder in the floor. Through it the detective could easily see part of the room below and hear every word spoken.

Old King Brady pressed the young detective's arm and they crept toward the cylinder.

In a moment they were flat on the floor and taking in the scene below.

Con Corcoran sat with his chair tilted back against the wall of the room.

He was smoking.

Hardy sat at a table with a pen and paper in his hands.

At the opposite side of the table sat a woman. She had large, expressive eyes and a bland sort of countenance. She was stout in figure and richly dressed.

This was Ann Prentiss, the most famous fence and confidence woman in America.

On her finger glittered a huge diamond ring. She drummed lightly on the table with her hand and listened to the villains across the table.

"Lively Ann" she was known to the police. Many times she had given them the slip.

"There's no chance whatever to get at the game in Chicago," Hardy was saying. "I canvassed the field carefully and they are dead onto us."

"The Chicago papers have made a great deal of stir over the Moore case," declared "Lively Ann."

"Confound the newspapers!" cried Corcoran with an oath. "They're always meddling and prying. The Sloane game would have netted us a hundred thousand, carefully handled."

"But it's up now," declared Hardy.

"Which calls to my mind a noteworthy fact," said "Lively Ann." "Speaking of the Moore case——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Hardy, with interest, "what is it?"

"Old Moore has taken the matter of abuse of his confidence greatly to heart."

"Awfully sad," said Corcoran facetiously.

"Perhaps it may prove grievous for us yet," pursued "Lively Ann."

"Why don't you quit talking in riddles?" exploded Hardy. "What are you driving at?"

"You're impatient!"

"You're exasperating as well as charming."

"Lively Ann" giggled.

"Now you are getting personal," she purred. "Well, to be brief, old Moore has employed the best detectives in America. Why, I hear that the famous Two Bradys have been put onto the case!"

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Hardy. "Is it true?"

"I think it is."

"Then we had better draw our lines close and lie low for a while."

"Correct!" cried Corcoran. "That Old King Brady is the greatest fox on earth, and the young detective is not far behind him."

"There is one way to dispose of them," said Hardy ominously.

"Now you are indulging in riddles," said "Lively Ann." "What is your plan?"

"Put the Three Fleas on their trail as a counter scent."

"The Fleas?"

"You know them—Brick Barton, Ted Hurley and Jason Hart. They are the greatest ferrets in the slums. There is no underground den or retreat that they do not know. The police of New York have hunted them for years. It is said that their natural home is the Big Sewer. They eat garbage and sleep in ash heaps. They are merciless, unscrupulous and perfect thugs in the execution of silent and deadly vengeance."

"We will put the Fleas on the track of the Bradys, who are now on our track."

"It will be easy for us to lead the detectives on, all unconscious of the fact that they are being dogged themselves by Death in the form of the Three Fleas."

"Good! Hurrah!" cried both Corcoran and "Lively Ann," clapping their hands. "You are a peach, Hardy. Do you know these fellows?"

"As I do you!"

"They are reliable?"

"As time itself."

"Death to the Two Bradys!"

The effect of all this upon the two listening detectives can be imagined but hardly described.

To know that they were but a few feet from the very people who thirsted for their life blood and apt at any moment to be betrayed was by no means reassuring.

But Old King Brady only smiled grimly and exchanged glances with Young King Brady.

Both detectives had heard of the Three Fleas.

In all Gotham a harder trio of toughs could not have been found.

They were more than thugs. They were thugs and crafty murderers who were so thoroughly familiar with the hiding places of New York's slums that it was next to impossible for the detectives to run them to earth.

To put such assassins as these on their track meant possible serious results for the Bradys.

But there was one consolation.

Forewarned is forearmed.

The Bradys were aware of the impending peril and would, of course, be on their guard.

"Now," said Hardy finally, "I think we need stand no more in dread of the Bradys."

"For I!" cried Corcoran. "You have a great head. But why not go ahead with our new enterprise, then, as if we were not hounded by the law?"

"Of course," agreed Hardy. "The Chicago scheme is pure. We will drop that. Now for the Hayden. We would like a report from you, Annie."

"You shall have it," cried "Lively Ann." "I visited her Hayden at his Westchester farm."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"What result?"

"He will tell you. I think he will be easy plucking. I will give him a good story of my sick husband, who is a Klondiker."

"Yes!"

"You here must officiate as the sick husband."

"All right," agreed Corcoran. "General utility is my strength."

"If you do your part well," said the woman impressively, "I can make a clean ten thousand out of that old jay."

## CHAPTER IV.

### AT THE HAYDEN FARM.

It is hardly necessary to say that the two detectives picked up their ears.

There was a revelation of the most important kind. To be in the track of a new confidence game was rich luck. They could see how easy it might be to entrap the Artorio while in the very act of carrying out their nefarious scheme.

They strained their hearing.

"Don't you fret," said Corcoran confidently. "I will do my part well."

"All right," agreed Hardy. "What is your system, Corcoran?"

"The time-honored gag, as old as the hills of Rome, but effective and unfailing as the poison of a serpent," repeated the confidence woman. "The good old brick game. The good old brick!"

"Yes."

"At a moment there was silence."

"You think he is a safe subject to work on?" asked Corcoran.

"In my opinion he is."

"All right. Go ahead then. I have faith in you at all times."

"When are you going to see him?"

"He is coming to New York to-morrow forenoon. He will sit me at my humble home, in Second avenue. You know the number. There he will see the returned miner bed, and the gold brick made of nuggets, formed out of sandlike soil, will be there. The gold brick is given as security for money advanced on new claims near New York City and to enable the miner to return and dig out his lion. Ten thousand dollars Farmer Hayden will

leave in our hands, and, as usual, he gets the brick of gold."

The bunco steerers laughed uproariously.

"You're a dandy, Annie!"

"It takes a woman to fool 'em."

"Every time."

"All very clever!"

"Yes," muttered Old King Brady under his breath.

"All very clever."

"Hold on!" cried Corcoran. "Give me credit for a neat game, too. Behold the noble Count Giuseppe, who alone holds the inside track at the swell Mrs. Hadley-Larkin's palace, in Fifth avenue. She has almost signed my check for twenty thousand, with Italian bonds as security."

"Thirty thousand easy if those two jobs pan out well!" cried Hardy with glee. "We can soon take up our abode in fair Paree and own a palace there!"

What further projected schemes might have been revealed to the listening detectives but for an incident it is hard to guess.

But at that moment a light footstep sounded at the threshold of the chamber in which they were.

In the doorway appeared a colored serving maid, for the bunco steerers had an organized household, with proper servants.

She entered the room and for a moment did not observe the two men stretched out on the floor.

The Bradys saw her.

Neither dared breathe.

She crossed the room to the bureau. It was possible that she might have retired without noticing the two detectives.

But over the bureau was a mirror.

It was in this that she saw them very plainly.

The result was thrilling.

She instantly stopped and for a moment stared at them.

Then a cry of terror pealed from her lips. She made a wild dash from the room.

Down the stairs she fled shrieking.

Of course, all was in an uproar in a moment. Old King Brady sprang to his feet.

Young King Brady did the same.

The young detective's first impulse was to dash for the roof and escape by the way they had entered the house.

But Old King Brady had a different plan.

"This way," he whispered.

Out into the corridor they sprang.

Near the landing was a closet. The door was open. Pulled back from the door, however, were heavy arras or hangings.

The old detective reached this heavy curtain and hid himself behind it, as did Young King Brady.

Each held a cocked revolver in his hand. In case of discovery they would defend themselves.

Of course, the serving girl gave the alarm to the crooks in the room below.

Incoherently she told them of the two men in the room above.

Hardy and Corcoran, with savage curses, drew revolvers and sped up the stairs. The woman, Ann Prentiss,

and the serving maid rushed to a rear window to see the invaders escape by the only avenue seemingly left open to them.

Old King Brady could have touched the two bunco-steerers as they passed by him.

When they disappeared in the room from which they had just come the old detective slid out from his covert.

Down the stairs the two detectives silently sped.

Down to the street floor they went.

Old King Brady noiselessly lifted the bolt of the front door. Both detectives went carefully and silently and unseen by its occupants out of the house.

A moment later they were mingled with the pedestrians along Forty-fourth Street.

Of course the quest of Corcoran and Hardy was fruitless.

They found no traces of the two men described by the maid. The result was that they discredited her story.

It was put down as a false alarm.

The shadowing expedition of the two Bradys was a complete success.

They had gained some exceedingly valuable clews. Young King Brady asked:

"Shall we get a squad of police and surround the house?"

"Too soon," said Old King Brady, shaking his head.

"We have them corraled."

"Very true, but we have no case against them. Their methods are so keen that nothing could be proved against them. We shall catch them red-handed soon, and then the result will be conclusive."

"Then your plan is to follow the Farmer Hayden case?"

"Exactly."

"That will do first rate. Now, I have a plan!"

The old detective nodded.

"All right," he said.

"It will not be difficult to find the residence of Farmer Hayden in Westchester. Suppose I go there and engage work as a farm hand if possible. You can hold this end of the scent."

"Capital!" cried Old King Brady. "You are doing well, Harry."

"I have not done it yet," replied the young detective modestly. "If you want to get word to me, write or send to Jonas Pilkins, care Farmer Hayden, Westchester."

"Jonas Pilkins?"

"Yes."

"You will go at once?"

"By the first train."

"Good! I will remain in this vicinity. The farmer will of course come to town first."

"Yes."

"He will no doubt visit the den of the bunco-steerers on Second Avenue. The gold brick will be there. But Farmer Hayden will not have the money with him, you may be sure. The bunco-steerers will have to carry the brick to his country home. You can then look out for your end of it."

"Just so."

"If anything occurs to alter this assumed course of affairs, I will send you immediate word."

"Correct."

"We will catch the rascals red-handed. It will be a great scoop!"

"I should say so!"

The two detectives separated. There was no trouble. A half hour later a train from the Grand Central depot took Young King Brady out to Westchester.

Farmer Hayden was well known in that rural locality. It was not difficult for the hulking country boy who had got off the New York train to locate his farm.

Farmer Hayden sat in his barn door chewing a pipe of hay when the country boy lounged into his yard.

"Haow d'ye do," said Jonas Pilkins, with a good Jersey twang. "Air yew Mister Hayden?"

The farmer looked at Jonas critically.

"That's my name," he said. "How's crops over in Jersey?"

"Fair tew middlin'," replied Jonas with an awkward shuffle of his cowhide boots. "Dew yew wanter hired hand? I can durned good all-round man?"

Farmer Hayden chewed hay.

It was some moments before he made a reply. The farmer said:

"Wall, I dunno. I'm pooty well fixed fer help. I don't need no more."

"Look here, Mister," said Jonas, earnestly, "I'm fer work. Pay ain't no objection. I'll work fer myself. That's fair, hain't it?"

Farmer Hayden brightened up.

This looked like a sinecure in the line of hired hands. He stared at Jonas again.

"What kin ye do?" he asked.

"Anything on a farm."

Farmer Hayden arose.

"Take a pail an' go in an' milk them cows," he said. "At six o'clock ye kin go up tew the house tew see the Ter-morrer morning yew kin git up at five an' milk 'em. Then drive me to the daypo, fer I'm goin' to New York. If I like ye, I'll keep ye."

Jonas Pilkins pulled off his coat.

Now it was lucky for Young King Brady that so many of his boyhood days had been spent on a farm.

Therefore he was familiar with the art of milking cows and other farm chores in general.

The new man did the work up complete.

That evening Farmer Hayden sat in his barn door and chuckled.

"If he only holds out," he muttered; "but most of the kind of chaps don't hold out."

At this moment Jonas Pilkins came out of the barn, smacking his lips.

He had just placed himself outside of a steaming tub of supper.

He glanced shyly at his employer, but respectfully kept his distance. Hayden grunted with satisfaction.

"Knows his place, tew," he muttered.

Then he called out sharply:

"Come down here, Pilkins."  
 Jonas came shambling forward. He ventured to sit on the overturned waterpail at the other corner of the door-

"How's things in Jersey, anyway? I used to think I'd be in Jersey. But I reckon Westchester tops anything over there."

"Oh, heaps better," agreed Jonas. "It's dead still over here now. Hain't much call fer Jersey market stuff. It's why I came over here to find work."

Hayden grimly listened.

"Got a level head, too," he thought. Then, out loud: "I yew ever hear tell of a place called the Klondike?"  
 Jonas looked blank.

"Nope!" he said.

"Durned ignorant," thought Hayden. Then, aloud: "Well, it's a place whar they dig gold. They find it thar eaps. I've a mind ter sell this farm an' go thar." "You'd be a fool!"

"Eh?"  
 Hayden turned in surprise. The words were forcible, the expression on Pilkins' face was mobile, and almost hostile.

## CHAPTER V.

### HAYDEN IS NOT SO GREEN.

"What makes ye think I'd be a fool?" asked Hayden. "I don't say so."

"Because thar was a farmer over in Jersey who give me a thousand dollars to a chap fer a lot in ther gold coun-try an' he found he'd been buncoed. Thar warn't no gold thar, an' he was jist out ten thousand. Thet's

sho!" gasped Farmer Hayden. "You don't say!"

When he lapsed into silent thought.

"But that Jersey farmer," he asked, finally, "did business with a man, didn't he?"

"Yep!" replied Jonas.

"Aw—that's different!"

The conversation now shifted to other topics. The Klondike was not again referred to.

At last Young King Brady could see that the farmer was under the glamour of the golden spell cast upon him by the cunning Lively Ann.

He saw that the chances were even that this unsuspecting victim would become a victim of the gloating spider unless something intervened.

The next day Young King Brady drove the farmer to the depot.

He took a New York train.

The young detective knew where he was going. Of course he could only guess, but he fancied that Hayden had a large amount of money with him.

Old King Brady had guessed aright.

Cautious, as all men of his stamp were, Hayden had

decided to first look into the gold scheme before putting his money into it.

The chances were good that he would only be roped in by the schemers after some amount of skilful work. The young detective was determined to be on hand when this time came.

That evening Hayden returned.

He was in an abstract mood and his eyes burned with a curious light. He sat in his barn door chewing wisps of hay more energetically than ever.

Jonas Pilkins tried to draw him out, but in vain.

Hayden was not in a talkative mood. He retired early, and Jonas did the same.

The next day Hayden was lachrymose and surly. He spent much of his time studying illustrated pamphlets on the Klondike country. Young King Brady smiled.

"He is an easy victim for the sharpers," he muttered. "Fools are not all dead yet. Ah, Farmer Hayden, you may have us to thank yet for saving you from certain ruin."

The second day of Jonas' stay at the Hayden farm passed. At night he walked down to the little post-office and got a letter.

Thus it read:

"DEAR HARRY: Your man Hayden came to town and was entertained at the Second Avenue tenement by the sick Klondiker and his wife. I was on the fire-escape and heard all. He did not give up his money then for the gold brick, but he is bound to do it sooner or later. Expects a visit from Corcoran and Lively Ann to-morrow. The other bird is lying low in the Forty-fourth Street house. Everything else is serene. The Three Fleas are behind me, but I am on my guard and fool them. I shall be on hand with the others to-morrow. Yours,

"JAMES BRADY."

Young King Brady read this bit of news with much satisfaction.

Everything was working well.

Perhaps before another night a case would be made out against the wily bunco-steerers and they would be behind bars.

Young King Brady slept well that night.

The next day Hayden seemed in better spirits. He whistled and sang and chuckled about his work.

About noon, and while Jonas was giving the cattle fodder in the barnyard, he heard Hayden shout savagely:

"Get out of thar, yew dirty hobo! Go on, or I'll put a pitchfork through ye!"

From behind a cock of hay a man of nondescript appearance shuffled out. A worse specimen of the genus tramp it would have been hard to find.

He slid out into the highway and came sidling along by the barnyard fence.

As he got opposite Jonas, Hayden went into the barn. Then the pseudo tramp gave Young King Brady a signal.

The young detective knew who it was.

It was Old King Brady.

He answered the signal.

The old detective leaned over the fence and said in an undertone:

"Corcoran and Lively Ann are on the way. Keep your eye on Hayden."

"All right," replied Young King Brady.

"You got my letter?"

"Yes."

The hobo shuffled on and presently disappeared behind a stone wall. A half hour later a wagon with three occupants drove up.

Beside the driver, who was also the station agent, there was a man dressed in the rough garments of a miner and a woman plainly dressed.

They alighted at the farm-house door.

The man was on crutches.

Hayden came out of the barn.

He greeted them hospitably, and all went into the house except the driver, who went on his way. A moment later the hobo slid out from behind the stone wall and went around the barn.

Jonas dropped his fork and slid into the kitchen of the farm house. The housekeeper was asleep in her chair.

All the other men were haying far away in the fields. So the coast was clear.

Jonas glided to a side door and lifted the latch. A man was crouched close to the house under the sitting-room window, which was open.

It was the hobo.

Young King Brady made a signal. Then he crept to the closed door of the sitting-room. The keyhole was large and of the old-fashioned kind.

The young detective could both see and hear.

It is needless to say that he improved his chance.

Hayden sat at a table.

Corcoran and "Lively Ann" were seated to the right and left.

On the table was the gold brick.

It looked shining and bright. That is was real gold there seemed no doubt. Hayden was reading a paper.

"There is the assayer's certificate," Corcoran said convincingly. "I don't see what more evidence ye want, stranger. He took ther sample right out of ther centre of the brick and assayed it ninety-eight per cent. pure virgin gold."

Hayden nodded slowly.

"Yas," he said; "I see."

"Now, ten thousand only represents about two-thirds of what that brick is worth. I'm makin' a big sacrifice."

"Why don't ye take the brick to the mint and git full value?" asked Hayden, with more shrewdness than he had shown heretofore.

"Haven't I explained?" said Corcoran impatiently. "I told ye that I want to keep the brick, and I only offer it to you as security for money enough to get back to the Klondike. I'll redeem it mighty quick and double your money fer you in a year."

Hayden's eyes glistened.

It was a tempting offer.

"What are you afraid of?" asked "Lively Ann."

"You've got security enough. You'll have the gold brick

just the same. If we don't redeem it in a year you keep it."

Hayden drew a roll of bank notes from his pocket. They were of large denomination.

He proceeded to count them slowly.

The two bunco-steerers watched him like hawks.

The two detectives heard all. They awaited the result with interest.

Slowly Hayden counted the money. Suddenly he paused and looked at the bunco-steerers sharply.

"How do I know ye'll redeem the brick at all?" asked.

"Why, if we don't, you have the gold," said Corcoran smoothly. "You will be the winner and we are the losers."

"Have ye any other security to offer—any real estate?"

"You know we have not," said "Lively Ann." "I assure you that this gold is all we have in the world."

Hayden fingered the bank notes.

Then he arose.

"Wait a minute," he said.

"Our time is valuable," said Corcoran. "There are others waiting for this same opportunity we offer you."

"I'll gin 'em plenty of chance," said the farmer coolly. "I'll be back in a minute."

Then he stepped to the door through the keyhole which Young King Brady was looking.

The young detective had just time to leap out through the outer room and out of doors.

Hayden passed through and came into the open yard. Then he raised his voice:

"Jonas!" he shouted. "Jonas Pilkins!"

Young King Brady came lumbering around the house. He stuck his pitchfork in the ground.

"Aye, sir, I'm comin'."

He came up to the steps.

Hayden gazed keenly at him.

"Jonas," he said, "ye're pooty level-headed. D'ye remember what ye told me about ther Klondike yesterday?"

Young King Brady stared at the farmer. He was astonished.

But he made reply:

"Indeed I do, sir."

"Come in here."

The young detective was startled at this turn in affairs. Truly Farmer Hayden was an eccentric character. Without further hesitation he followed him.

Into the little room in which the bunco-steerers were waiting, Hayden led the way.

Both Corcoran and "Lively Ann" stared at Jonas in surprise. It was an unlooked-for proceeding.

"This is my hired man, Jonas Pilkins," said Hayden in an off-hand manner. "He knows more about the Klondike an' gold bricks than I do."

"What is this?" exclaimed Corcoran, assuming an angry tone. "Are you trifling with us?"

"Come," said "Lively Ann," rising, "let us go, hobo band."

"Oh, tut-tut! Don't git nervous," said Hayden. "I just wanted to ask some advice, that's all. Now, Jon

ot a good head and he oughter be able to help me  
e bunco-steerers gazed at Jonas. They saw a stupid,  
g pattern of rustic, and again a grin of assurance  
to their faces.

at could be easier than to also make a dupe of this  
man? If Hayden was easy, Jonas ought to be dough  
eir hands.

they began work.

the most skilful manner they expatriated upon the  
of the gold brick and the large profit that Hayden  
derive from its sale in the event of their failure to  
m it.

as grinned and was awfully tickled.

e smooth language and deft compliments pleased  
and the bunco-steerers felt sure they had him solid.  
is stage Hayden said tersely:

all, Jonas, what do yew say? Would yew give 'em a  
of ten thousand dollars on that gold brick?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### A NEW LEAD.

as a moment full of suspense.

crisis was on.

as grinned and scraped with his foot and made an  
rd bow. He looked at Hayden, and then at Cor-  
and lastly at "Lively Ann."

l-durned ef I would!" he said.

bunco-steerers nearly fell over.

den looked triumphant.

y, man," gasped Corcoran, "you didn't understand  
estion."

p!" heplied Jonas.

en you don't know what you're saying. Why  
't you loan ten thousand on a gold brick worth by  
's certificate fifteen thousand?"

s grinned and jerked his thumb toward the brick.  
in't gold!" he snickered.

path dropped from Corcoran's lips.

that fool out, Hayden," he said angrily. "I re-  
do business while he's in the room."

den drew himself up and folded his arms.

so fast, Mister Man," he said. "When Jonas goes  
u go out, too."

at do you mean?"

ean that I don't believe thar's fifteen thousand dol-  
gold in that brick, an' Jonas is right."

he-he!" snickered Jonas.

oran's face was purple.

picked up the brick and placed it in his satchel.  
e donned his hat.

he, wife," he said, "let us go back to New York.  
't afford to keep the company of fools!"

kin go as quick as ye please," said Hayden loqua-

ciously, "an' ye kin try some other sucker fer the ten  
thousand. But ye can't try me!"

With black looks the bunco-steerers passed out of the  
house.

At this moment Young King Brady saw the old detect-  
ive at the window.

Swift signals passed between them.

By this telegraphy the following conversation took place.

"Shall we pursue the pair, or arrest?"

"No; let them go. We shall get at a deeper game."

Farmer Hayden watched the bunco-steerers pass out of  
sight down the road.

Then he chuckled and smote his hip with his hand.

"In course thet brick warn't gold," he cried. "Jonas,  
you've saved me ten thousand dollars. You're the best  
hired man I ever had. B'gosh! let's have some cider."

Down from a shelf Hayden pulled a jug and some mugs.  
The jug held a good quality of hard cider.

Young King Brady's eyes twinkled.

He sat down to the table with Hayden.

The farmer poured the mugs full of cider. The young  
detective lifted his, and dropping his country accent, said  
in smooth, suave tones:

"Mr. Hayden, you're a man of sense. I'll drink to your  
success in defeating a bunco game."

Hayden stared.

"Jonas!" he exclaimed. "W-what——"

But he went no further.

"No harm would have come to you in any event, Mr.  
Hayden," said Young King Brady.

Then, quick as a flash, the young detective pulled off  
his wig and threw open his coat, showing a star.

"I am a detective!" he said.

Hayden was stunned.

"A detective!" he gasped. "Jerusha Jimcracks! Why  
didn't you say so afore? An' them two people——"

"Were bunco-steerers!"

Hayden whistled.

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"For certain reasons. But, with your permission, I'll  
ask in a friend."

Young King Brady went to the window and put up the  
sash higher. Old King Brady climbed over the sill.

"The hobo!" gasped Hayden.

"Another detective," explained Young King Brady.  
"We travel together. We are known as the Two Bradys."

The astonished farmer was now quite overcome. He  
knew not what to say or do.

But Old King Brady made a transformation in his per-  
sonal appearance by dropping off some of his rags, turn-  
ing his coat and rubbing rouge from his nose and cheeks.

He looked more like himself. The farmer stared and  
finally managed to say:

"So ye really followed them chaps here? Ye knew  
they had this game ready fer me?"

"Sure!" replied Young King Brady.

Hayden brought his fist down on the table with a crash.

"Take what ye want," he cried. "Ther hull place is  
yours. Hang me, but ye've saved me a heap of money.

Jonas, my hired man, a detective! Well, well, I never! But, I say, aren't ye goin' to stick to yer job?"

The two Bradys laughed.

"Harry has another job," said Old King Brady. "I'm afraid he won't be able to milk the cows to-morrow morning."

All laughed heartily, and Farmer Hayden insisted on bringing more cider.

Then Old King Brady exchanged glances with Young King Brady, and said:

"I think we had better go along, Harry. There is hot work ahead of us. We must go down on the same train with those people."

"Right!" agreed the young detective. "Well, good-by, Mr. Hayden."

"Durn my ears!" ejaculated the farmer, "ye're the best gentlemen I've met in a lifetime. I hate to have ye go."

But the detectives shook hands with the farmer and started for the station.

It was quite a walk down the dusty highway. The day was drawing to a close.

In a wooded section of the road the detectives paused and effected a new disguise.

When they reached the station they were just ordinary, plain-looking countrymen. They affected not to notice Corcoran and "Lively Ann," who were in the waiting-room.

And the bunco-steerers scarcely noticed the detectives.

At least their suspicions were not at all aroused. But when they boarded the train the detectives occupied the same car.

It was dark when the train rolled into the Grand Central depot.

Corcoran and "Lively Ann" alighted from the train. Old King Brady jostled them in the crowd and heard Corcoran say:

"I can't show up in Forty-fourth street to-night, Annie. I've got to go down to the Brunswick and make up for Count Giuseppe. This is the night of Mrs. Hadley-Larkin's ball. I must be there."

Old King Brady had learned all that he wished.

He could see no necessity for shadowing the bunco-steerers further. So he pulled Young King Brady aside.

"What is the matter?" asked the young detective. "Shall we drop them?"

"Sure!" replied the old detective. "There is a warm night's work ahead of us, Harry."

"What is it?"

"Mrs. Hadley-Larkin's ball."

"Ah! I see the point. Count Giuseppe will be there."

"Yes."

"Enough! What shall we do?"

"Go to our lodgings, take a rest and participate in the festivities later on."

"Good!"

First the detectives took a car down town to police headquarters. Old King Brady found the police chief in his private office.

"Do you cover the Hadley-Larkin ball?" he asked.

"We do," replied the chief, obsequiously, to the first detective.

"You have cards for secret detectives?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"Ten."

"Lay off two of your men and give me the cards for you, kindly?"

"Certainly. You suspect sharp work there?"

"A party whom we are tracking will be there."

The chief of police opened a drawer in his desk and took out two handsomely engraved invitations. This was the swellest ball New York had seen in many days.

He handed them to Old King Brady.

"I wish you success," he said.

"Thank you," replied the great detective. The chief bowed himself out.

This matter settled, the two Bradys proceeded to their lodgings.

It did not take them long to order a good dinner. Then they rested a couple of hours, enjoying a cigar and smoke.

At nine o'clock they proceeded to dress for the ball.

Old King Brady made himself up for the Viscount de Fleury, to whom the pseudo invitation was directed. He was the officer who would originally have attended to this ticket would have used.

Young King Brady made himself up as Reginald Devoe, an English snob.

They would never have been known for the two Bradys when the make-up was accomplished.

In their swell evening suits and kid gloves, with cloaks over their shoulders, the two Bradys were a pair of types of the denizens of swelldom.

At half-past ten they were in a carriage bowling down the regal Fifth avenue to the door of Mrs. Hadley-Larkin's house.

A rose-embowered walk led into the house.

The detectives presented their cards and were led to the ball. At the door they were announced:

"Viscount de Fleury."

"Reginald Devoe."

They passed into the gay assemblage. Nobody noticed them but the fair hostess, who was in the secret, of course, that they were detectives.

As a blind, of course, she welcomed them effusively. Then they mingled with the crowd.

A carriage had come up right behind them. A lady leaped out and came very jauntily into the mansion.

"Count De Giuseppe!"

Instantly the features of the hostess were seen to change.

She started forward with a far different manner. She welcomed this arrival. The two keen detectives saw that she was the hostess.

There was Corcoran, tall, handsome and leonine in evening dress.

No finer looking man was in the room. He met Hadley-Larkin with a nonchalant familiar grace that was of a sort which can never be acquired, but must come from the bone.

two Bradys kept a close watch on the bunco-festivities began.

Hungarian bands discoursed music, the ball-room swung open and gay couples went gliding over the polished floors.

More beautiful scene could not be imagined.

Grace and beauty, the brain and sinew, the heart and soul of Gotham's most brilliant social life was present.

It was serenely joyous.

That was the surface.

What was beneath it?

Who shall tell?

Money and jewels and power and sway cannot blind the penetrating, all-seeing Eye to the heartaches and wranglings, the hatred and jealousies, the treachery and guile—even baseness—lurking beneath that shining surface of content and joy.

And the Two Bradys, as they moved through the throng, perceived it all.

By their experience and keen perception they were able to perceive that which the ordinary person could never see. They saw that Count Giuseppe was one of the lions of the evening.

They watched him closely.

In spite of his deep game, they saw that he was not behind the petty measures of secretly appropriating the money and the watch of one of the ladies.

Anything which came into Corcoran's net was game. He had many little pleasant asides with Mrs. Hadley-Larkin.

One of these, Old King Brady, safely ensconced behind a pillar, heard the following:

"Come to me to-morrow at four o'clock, my dear count, and I will have the money ready for those precious bonds and securities. But I doubt if any enterprise of Italian concern can class with our own safe and sure United States bonds."

## CHAPTER VII.

### A REVELATION TO MRS. LARKIN.

Count Giuseppe must have gone home that night with confident assurance of success in his scheme.

He seemed to be in a most cheerful, and even hilarious, frame of mind after the champagne had popped, and was compelled to be assisted to his carriage.

That this was nothing.

Many others were in the same fix.

At four o'clock the next day he would be sure to have a wonderful interest-bearing Italian bonds on hand at Hadley-Larkin's house.

Of course his rich patroness would unhesitatingly put her name to a nice little check for twenty thousand dollars—and he would—well, what?

He would be a winner.

Count Giuseppe would fade from the horizon of New York's social life even as the fleeting comet passes into space on a new lap of its endless orbit.

Mrs. Hadley-Larkin would be surprised, perhaps a bit shocked, but twenty thousand dollars was a mere bagatelle to her, and could not be allowed to ruffle the serenity and placidity of her daily life.

She would forget it.

But the wily Count Giuseppe, alias Corcoran, had not counted a third and fourth party in the game.

He had not reckoned upon so grewsome a factor as a detective, or a brace of them.

It so happened that exactly at one o'clock the next day the overtaxed but still smiling hostess was in her reception-room settling certain affairs with the detectives who had served the night before.

Mrs. Larkin showed plainly the terrible strain which she had undergone.

Her face was lined and haggard and her eyes swollen. Thus she was paying the penalty of assuming to be one of New York's leaders in society.

The detectives had reports to make.

Several crooks had been detected and placed under arrest.

The names of others who had, from that distressing complaint kleptomania, or some other cause, appropriated wilfully or otherwise the valuables of fellow-guests, were listed.

It was a delicate matter. They were criminals of a higher class, and a polite note with a covert hint must be written to each. Of course if the guilty one was wise, he or she, to avoid publicity, would return the appropriated valuables with profuse and innocent apologies and explanations.

Oh, human nature! Frail and inconsistent art thou. None can know this better than the keen, practical detective. With him all men are thieves until proven innocent. A lamentable fact.

Old King Brady, in his tightly-buttoned blue coat, faced the fair hostess in a grave manner.

"I was present last night in my capacity as detective," he said, seriously. "I have a very important matter to confer with you upon."

Mrs. Larkin bowed.

"Very well, Mr. Brady," she replied.

"Kindly step this way."

Into a small side room they passed. The detective seated himself before the lady. Then he said:

"There is a gentleman who has won your esteem and confidence of whom I will speak. He is a foreigner."

Mrs. Larkin gave a startled look at the old detective.

Her face paled.

"Well?" she asked.

"He will call upon you to-day and endeavor to foist upon you for twenty thousand dollars of your good money a quantity of Italian bonds."

Mrs. Larkin gasped.

"Do—do you refer to—to Count Giuseppe?"

The detective bowed.

"Impossible! He is entered in the Almanac de Gotha——"

"Which is a German registry, and he claims to be an Italian. Very inconsistent, madam. He is an unmitigated fraud!"

Mrs. Larkin was quite overcome.

She arose and paced the floor.

"You know this?" she asked.

"I do."

"I have been much interested in the young man. Why, this is dreadful. You believe the bonds are bogus?"

"I know they are."

Mrs. Larkin recovered herself.

"Well," she said, practically, "what would you advise me to do?"

"I wish to entrap the rascal. I have already one case against him for attempted swindling at the gold brick game. That would make one indictment. Properly managed, this affair should make another.

"You know, Mrs. Larkin, it is to your interest, as well as that of all respectable people, that such impostors should be put behind bars."

Mrs. Larkin clasped her hands and walked the floor. It could be seen that she was much excited.

"To think that this can be true of Count Giuseppe!" she said tremulously. "It is dreadful. I must have better proof," she suddenly asserted, turning about and facing Old King Brady.

The detective smiled.

"I will arrange it so that you shall have no trouble in proving his true character," he said.

"I shall be pleased if you will do so."

"First, I see that your window is very capacious and enables you to look up and down the street, and also to see anyone on your steps."

"That is true."

"Madam," said the old detective, "at four o'clock I will cross the street and ascend these steps. He will then be in this room talking with you.

"You shall carefully examine the bogus bonds and draw out his scheme. I believe your own perception will be sufficient to satisfy you that he is what I claim. Be sure and do not give him a check for the bonds.

"Put him off. Tell him to call again to-morrow. Then suddenly draw his attention to the window. He will see me. You will express delight at seeing me and propose calling me into the room, and ask him to stay and meet me. You shall see the result."

Mrs. Larkin bowed.

"All shall be as you say," she said.

With this Old King Brady retired.

He walked down the street and turned a corner. Here a man was standing in the shadow of a doorway.

It was Young King Brady.

"What luck?" asked the young detective.

"Everything is all right."

The old detective then detailed his plans.

Young King Brady listened with interest.

"Capital!" he said. "But why not take the rascal into camp?"

"Now?"

"Yes."

"Too early."

"Why?"

"It is easy to see," replied Old King Brady. "In the first place, we have only made a beginning in this. I want to get to the bottom. If we arrest one of them now you will not be able to catch another in a year."

"That is so," agreed Young King Brady.

"We have one indictment which we can prove against the Artful Trio. That is the Hayden gold brick. Here is another, which we can secure now. I have a bluff hand to play yet, which, if I succeed in playing, will bag the whole gang as completely and as handsomely as anything you ever saw done."

"A bluff hand?"

"Yes."

"Well, you beat me. Why don't you let me into your plans?"

"I will let you into the big bluff, and it is wholly and purely a bluff."

"Please do so."

Old King Brady drew out his note book and made a diagram. It was his favorite method of illustrating his varied forms of deductions.

When he had finished Young King Brady was cowed away with the plan.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "It is a regular sweep! We will work out the big bluff. Won't the rascals be surprised? The 'Bradys' great bluff' will be the talk of the crooks one while, I'll warrant."

Old King Brady smiled grimly.

"But the time is not ripe yet," he declared. "The time it soon will be. First, we must attend to this affair of Mrs. Larkin's. At four o'clock we may expect to see the festive Count Giuseppe drive up in state to the door of our would-be victim. I must be in that locality."

"Can I be of assistance?"

"I think not."

"Then I will hang around here until you have finished."

"Very good."

Old King Brady went back into Fifth avenue. He watched the entrance to Mrs. Larkin's house assiduously. At exactly four o'clock a cab drove up.

Out of it leaped the oiled and perfumed Count Giuseppe.

He sprang lightly up the marble steps and touched the bell. A moment later he vanished in the mansion.

Very slowly and methodically Old King Brady crossed the street.

Into Mrs. Larkin's reception room the affable Count was shown. He found the fair hostess there awaiting him.

Her manner seemed as cordial as ever and her smile as less winning. The count indulged in light and pleasant talk for a while.

Gradually, however, he approached the subject of his visit.

His hostess' mild eyes were fixed very attentively

She did not fail to note with what dexterity he dealt matters to a point. Finally he drew the bogus bonds from his pocket and laid them on a table with an onyx surface. "I have no bit of good fortune which I do not wish you share, Mrs. Larkin," he said glibly. "I know what this investment is, and I know my word is sufficient to you. I am a large holder of these bonds and profit largely by them. I want to share my good fortune with you." "How very kind!" drawled Mrs. Larkin, with a winsome smile.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE COUNT RECEIVES A SURPRISE.

"My motives are wholly disinterested," pursued the glib Count. "I would scorn to make a profit from a friend. Your philanthropy is unbounded, my dear count," said Mrs. Larkin. "I would be worse than unappreciative not to avail myself of it." "I am glad to be able to put so remunerative an investment in your way," assured the count. "But I am able to procure only a limited amount of shares. Twenty thousand dollars! A pittance!" "Indeed, yes. Is there no possible chance of securing more?" "Corcoran gave a quick glance at his intended victim. Her half-closed eyes were fixed on the bonds. But her manner was artless. He was disarmed. "It is possible that I might secure more shares in a few days, or, if you insist, I will surrender some of mine." "I could not think of that," said Mrs. Larkin. "Dear Count, where is my check book? I really believe I was careless enough to leave it at the bank." "Is it yours the Murray Hill Bank?" "I believe so."

"No need for alarm, then. I have a Murray Hill Bank check book right here. Perhaps it would be better to finish the transaction now, as I am going out of town for a few days to-morrow." "So?" exclaimed Mrs. Larkin. "For an extended stay?" "A brief week in the Capital City of Washington. My official duties have been a tax, and I must rusticate——" "And you go to Washington," laughed Mrs. Larkin. "Very good! Let me see the check book. Oh, I forgot! My Murray Hill account, I fear, is overdrawn. How dreadfully unfortunate. Will you not leave the bonds with me until to-morrow? I might remit you the check at Washington——" "—er—well," stammered the perplexed bunco-steerer. "You see I have to account for the bonds to the brokers, but I will consult them——" "It is not necessary," said Mrs. Larkin archly. "I will put you to that trouble. I can send a messenger to the office of my secretary, Mr. Bland. No doubt he will take up and close the transaction with you. He is an

able lawyer, and, really, I do no business myself at all. But, to change the subject a moment. I received quite a shock this morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the count nervously. "I am sorry to hear it. Now this matter——"

"You see it was this way," interrupted Mrs. Larkin with a charming laugh, "the detectives informed me this morning that I had as a visitor last night one of the most dangerous crooks in New York. He actually danced incognito once with me, and I did not know him. Think of it! It gives me a chill now. His name—let me see! I think they said he was a bunco man and his name was Corcoran!"

Count Giuseppe's face turned slowly ashen and then livid.

His fair companion was looking straight at him through half-shut eyes. There was nothing in her voice or her manner to indicate covert meaning.

The adroit villain for a moment feared that he had been betrayed. His craven soul trembled.

But slowly he came out of the mist of dread and doubt. Her manner was so frank, so simple—it could not be. He drew a deep breath.

But Mrs. Larkin had sprung up with alarm.

"My dear count," she cried, "you are ill. How pale you are. I will ring for a cordial."

"No, no," interposed the villain. "It is but momentary. A slight affection of the heart. It is all right now."

"I think I ought to call assistance," said Mrs. Larkin. "Are you sure you are quite recovered?"

"Oh, yes, yes. It is all over. I'm all right," said the wretch. "But your story. I lost the thread of it. I suppose this Corcoran is behind bars now?"

"Not so," replied Mrs. Larkin. "He eluded the detectives. But I understand they are close on his track. Ah! I believe there is some one at the door now."

Quite lightly and artlessly she ran to the window.

Corcoran tried to collect himself. Was she "onto" him? He swiftly asked himself.

A nameless terror seized him.

The impulse was upon him to wilt and fly—to abandon the game.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Larkin from the window. "It is a very old and dear friend of mine. I would like you to meet him very much, my dear count. You will not mind my asking him in to meet you?"

The "count" had strode to the window.

He gave one glance through the glass.

Then a gasping cry broke from his lips.

He turned ashen pale.

He shrank back and looked about for an avenue of escape. Horror and fear overmastered him.

For standing there on the doorstep was a tall, strong figure in a tightly-buttoned blue coat and soft felt hat. He knew that figure and those stern features.

They were a synonym of terror to him, as well as to other evil-doers.

"Old King Brady!" he gasped.

Then he rushed to the other end of the room, looking about him in a hurried way.

"Why, count," cried Mrs. Larkin in affected surprise. "What can be the matter? Are you ill?"

"Yes, yes!" gasped the terrified crook. "I am ill. I must get out into the air. I cannot meet your friend. I can see no one. I must get a cab and go home."

"Will you not have some cordial?"

"No, no, nothing. Let me see nobody. The side entrance. Let me out!"

"This is strange conduct," said Mrs. Larkin with affected sternness. "But I will accede to your request. There is a side entrance on the other street. Turn the corridor to your right—through that door. One moment! What about the bonds?"

"When I get back from Washington," panted the crook. "Farewell. Pardon my strange conduct, but I am ill."

Out of the room "Count Giuseppe" dashed. The ringing laugh of Mrs. Larkin followed him.

Then he knew all.

But he never knew whether he owed it to her magnanimity or the careless methods of the detectives that he made his escape.

A few moments later Old King Brady stood in the room facing Mrs. Larkin. The old detective was triumphant.

"Are you satisfied, madam?" he asked.

"I can only say that you have saved me from a dangerous villain," replied Mrs. Larkin. "You detectives are wonderful beings."

"Then you are willing to testify against this rascal when he is brought into court?" asked the detective.

"I will gladly do so."

"That is all, then. Good-day."

No attempt was made by either of the Bradys to follow Corcoran. They knew that nothing was to be gained by it.

Old King Brady turned into the side street where he was to meet Harry. He passed along a high capped wall of stone which fenced in the private ground of some residence.

Just ahead a gate stood open.

Suddenly the detective was startled to see two men spring out of this yard, and straight toward him.

Then there was a sound in his rear and powerful arms encircled his body. No other persons were visible in the street.

The three men who so suddenly attacked Old King Brady were instantly recognized by him.

They were the notorious gutter snipes and scavengers known as the "Three Fleas."

They meant to murder him.

This was certain.

It all came upon Old King Brady so quickly that he was almost powerless to act.

One of the trio had come up behind the old detective and seized him. But as the other two ruffians rushed out of the yard a third man followed them.

The old detective knew him.

It was Young King Brady.

Like human wolves the thugs sprang upon the old detective.

Death seemed certain, but at that moment Young King

Brady, drawing his revolver, dashed madly to his advance.

One of the Fleas had a knife and the other a club. The old detective had been quick enough to grasp the end of each.

The struggle which followed was fierce and savage.

Young King Brady could have shot any or all of the three ruffians. But he preferred not to do this unless it became necessary to save Old King Brady's life.

With the butt of his pistol he struck the nearest ruffian on the skull.

The blow was sharp and hard, and the villain dropped to the sidewalk. Leaving him, the young detective rushed upon the others.

The numbers were even now and the struggle furious. But Old King Brady slipped, and a blow on the head sent him to the pavement stunned.

Young King Brady was hurled aside by the two ruffians left. A curious whistle was sounded by one of them, and instantly they broke away and all three fled through the open gate.

The first one stunned by Young King Brady had revived. The young detective saw that Old King Brady was only momentarily stunned.

He also saw two officers running toward the spot.

This meant assistance.

So he gave chase to the trio.

But in vain.

Upon passing through the gate he saw that he was in a large yard.

Back a ways was a large brick house. The blinds were drawn, and it might be empty.

But the Three Fleas were gone.

Their first murderous attack upon the Bradys had failed.

Both detectives were much chagrined that they had escaped.

With the officers they searched the yard and the vicinity thoroughly. But not a trace of the scavengers could be found.

After a while the chase was abandoned.

It was now evening.

Old King Brady had recovered completely from the blow he had received. But he said determinedly:

"Harry, those three thugs are not going to escape easily. I am going to devote the night to giving them chase."

"I'm with you!" cried the young detective. "But about the bluff game?"

"We will have time enough to discuss that to-morrow. To-night we will devote to the Three Fleas."

Old King Brady now drew his note book from his pocket. They were at the moment under a street lamp at the corner of Third Avenue and a cross street.

The old detective scanned the pages of the note book. He found an entry.

He had made it himself many months before. It was destined to prove of service now.

He read it aloud to Young King Brady.

## CHAPTER IX.

## IN THE BLACK ALLEY.

It was almost a year ago," he said, as he showed the "that I came across a sailor who had been knifed in Chatham Square fracas.

This sailor's name was Holden and he was an Englishman. He told me of his experience with these three fellows.

He was decoyed into an opium den in a small alley, known as Black Lane, and not far from Chatham street.

The passage was not more than two hundred feet long. The movable flagstone enables the patrons of the place to get into an underground series of cells. Once in there, if they are possessed of money or valuables, they never get out with them—at least not alive.

Holden told me of this place. He described the three fellows, and on his dying bed at the hospital gave me this information by which I might find the passageway and locate the den.

I made several ineffectual efforts to find it. Other matters have so wholly occupied my attention since that I have not been able to work the case up. But now is my opportunity."

Old King Brady and Harry Brady closely studied the information.

The young detective said confidently:

"I believe I can locate that place."

"Eh?" exclaimed Old King Brady.

"I once chased a crook into just such a place as that. He is blinded by the first two stories of an unoccupied building. I think I got into the place by means of a basement or sub-cellar. There is a pawnbroker's shop near that spot."

"At least that affords a clew," cried the old detective. "I will try your memory on that, Harry."

"All right."

The two Bradys boarded a downtown Third Avenue car. Soon they were bowling through the Bowery. In due time they reached Chatham Square.

Here they alighted and work was begun. A surging mass of people were in that thoroughfare.

Young King Brady led the way through one dingy street and another. This part of New York is of the old-fashioned kind and there are side streets and alleys which only those of the better class of people who go slumming ever dream of.

Detectives and charity commissioners and Sisters of the Good Society sometimes find their way into these labyrinths of crookedness, depravity and sin.

The two Bradys wandered aimlessly through this section for hours.

It was near midnight when suddenly Young King Brady clutched the old detective's arm.

"I believe I recognize that corner," he said. "It is the spot!"

The young detective pointed to a high brick wall which

seemed only the blank side of a building facing on another street.

Old King Brady looked puzzled.

"I see no passage," he said.

"It is back of that wall."

"Wall?"

"Yes."

"I see only the side of a building."

Young King Brady laughed.

"I might as well explain," he said. "What seems to be the side of that two-story building is in reality a wall. Or, rather, that building has two walls, one being the wall of the building proper and the other the wall independent of that."

"Don't talk in riddles, Harry. I can't understand you."

"Do you see—yes, there is the pawnbroker's shop. This is the locality I visited once in pursuit of a crook."

"What is beyond that wall?"

"A passageway."

"Humph!"

"I investigated the matter at the time to satisfy my curiosity. A certain builder purchased this corner lot for a building.

"After he had erected the walls of the building it was found that his deed called for only fifty feet front extending west. Now he had fifty-four feet front. The extra strip four feet wide he discovered was involved in litigation for a hundred years back, and pre-emption of it would injure his own title.

"Well, he proposed to move his wall back, but I believe an ancient law was raked up which compels forfeiture as the penalty for a building trespass on another's land.

The trustees of that little four-foot strip of land compelled him to sacrifice his wall on front and side, and he was compelled to build a new wall four feet inside of the outer one. It is a curiously complicated matter and may again be raked up in the courts.

"But the fact remains, and so this curious passageway, known to but few and completely walled in, exists to-day.

"It makes a good hiding-place for crooks and thieves, and has been a secret den for years. I believe it must be the place into which your sailor Holden was decoyed."

"Exactly," cried Old King Brady. "But how do you get into the place?"

"I got in through a sub-cellar. There are actually underground chambers connected and extending nobody knows where."

"Just a likely place for the Three Fleas."

"Exactly."

"Well," said Old King Brady astutely, "we are lucky to know about this. We are as likely to get track of our birds here as any place in New York."

"Sure!"

Leisurely the two detectives crossed the street.

Along the false wall of the two-story building they walked.

Looking at the building from the front, it was easy to see how the secret recess could really exist.

But Young King Brady was unable to find any trace of the sub-cellar or basement by which he had entered.

It seemed that it had been closed by stone flagging.

How to gain an entrance to the secret den known as Black Alley, so named on account of its perpetual gloom, was a puzzle.

But Old King Brady suddenly remembered the ante-mortem statement of Holden the sailor.

He had spoken of a loose flagstone in the sidewalk.

At once the detectives began to carefully search for this.

They only pursued the search at such moments as the street was free from passersby.

As it was a side street, at that late hour, near midnight, the passers were few and far between.

After a long period of search the detectives were about to abandon the effort when suddenly Old King Brady stooped with an exclamation.

He placed his finger under the edge of a flagstone, part of which was under the wall. The light was dim, but it occurred to him that there was a crevice in the wall above the flagstone.

He tried to lift the stone.

But he was unable to do so.

It would not yield.

"No use!" said Young King Brady. "I tried that. It can't be the right one."

The old detective drew his dark lantern from his pocket.

He shot its rays along the base of the wall.

He saw that the cement and filling closed all apertures between the other flags and the wall.

But over this flagstone was a perfectly discernible space of half an inch in width.

The old detective studied this peculiarity a moment.

Then he said:

"I have it!"

"What?" exclaimed Young King Brady with interest.

"Look!"

The old detective inserted his fingers under the flag and pushed it back, as if on a greased track, under the wall. It slid back readily.

And under the flag was an aperture large enough to admit a man's body.

It was a well-like opening and in the darkness looked dangerous enough. But Old King Brady shot the rays of his lantern down into it.

He saw steps leading downward into what seemed like a sub-cellar under the sidewalk.

The limits of this sub-cellar were not visible.

But enough had been learned.

The two detectives looked about cautiously to make sure that they were not seen. No person was in sight.

Down into the sub-cellar the old detective went.

Young King Brady followed him.

The detective's dark lantern lit the way. They passed into a square excavation under the sidewalk and then followed a narrow passage a few feet into a part of what might have been the main cellar of the building as first constructed.

This in itself was a long, narrow underground chamber.

It contained nothing which would indicate recent occupation.

The detectives went through it carefully. There seemed to be but one other outlet and that was at its further end.

Stone steps led upward.

The detectives mounted these. A flat stone was pushed aside and they emerged at last into the Black Alley.

But as they did so a startling thing occurred.

A swift blow from the darkness sent Old King Brady's lantern flying.

It rolled to the far end of the alley, but still continued to shine and sent its powerful rays the length of the place.

Shadowy figures were seen and muffled curses filled the air.

In that instant the two Bradys realized that they had been a trifle reckless in venturing into a death trap such as this.

But now that they were in it, there was no other way but to fight, and fight for life, too.

For they were against murderers, and it depended alone on their prowess whether they escaped alive or not.

"Steady, Harry!" said Old King Brady. "Hold them off, if you can!"

"All right!" agreed the young detective. "They'll not get us easy!"

Young King Brady had pulled his revolver and now opened fire. Of course he was obliged to fire at random.

But howls and curses followed. Clubs and heavy objects came hurtling about the detectives' heads.

It was the revolver though which terminated the affair and saved the lives of the two Bradys.

Suddenly distant footsteps sounded, and then all was still.

The detectives waited for a renewal of the attack.

It did not come.

All was silence where a few moments before there had been riot and uproar and savage battle.

## CHAPTER X.

### A CLEVER DODGE.

Old King Brady was the first to take in the situation.

"They have skipped!" he cried. "They have got away, Harry!"

"Whew!" cried the young detective. "We ought to be thankful for that. I thought they had us sure."

"It was a close call!"

"I feel that it was."

Old King Brady recovered his dark lantern. Then the two detectives went through Black Alley.

They explored the place thoroughly.

But not a thing was discovered to indicate by what avenue the birds had flown. There was only one outlet discovered, and that was the one by which the detectives had entered.

But in the sub-cellar there was found a rude trap-door, and in an excavation under it was piled a heap of miscellaneous articles of plunder.

The detectives had no use for these.

So they did not trouble them.

In vain they searched for an explanation of the disappearance of the crooks. No clew was found.

It satisfied them of one thing.

There were other secret means of entrance and exit. For that matter there might be other sub-cellars or passages.

But the Bradys were baffled.

They could not find them.

Splashes of blood were found on the stone flagging in the Black Alley. This indicated that some one of the gang had been wounded by Young King Brady's shots.

Until near morning they searched.

Then Old King Brady said:

"No use, Harry. They've got the best of us. All that we can do is to give up the chase now and wait for another opportunity."

"Which may not come," said the young detective lugubriously.

"That is true."

The two detectives returned to the street. They pushed the flagstone back and emerged. It closed behind them.

Some sort of mechanism behind the wall thus closed it.

As they emerged Young King Brady clutched the old detective's arm.

"Look!" he said.

A skulking figure was seen in the shadows at the corner of the next street. It instantly disappeared.

"We are watched!"

Old King Brady smiled.

"Ahem!" he said.

Then he drew a big plug of tobacco from his pocket and bit off a piece. He buttoned his blue coat about him, looked up at the sky and then casually along the street.

He started at a camel-like gait up the narrow street. Young King Brady followed him.

Soon they were in Chatham Square.

Old King Brady led the way to City Hall Square and the detectives presently came out on Broadway.

They leaped on a car.

As they did so Young King Brady saw two men with checked hats at the corner of Chambers street.

His keen gaze sized them up at once.

"We're followed!" he said.

"Eh?" exclaimed Old King Brady nonchalantly. "Is that so?"

"Yes. There are two of the gang."

Old King Brady glanced at them. He made no comment.

But the two detectives, continuing to keep an eye out, saw that the two men kept as nearly abreast of the car as possible. There was a car ahead, which stopped often, and enabled them to keep up by swift walking.

Neither of the Bradys knew who these two pursuers were.

They might be two of the Three Fleas, but more likely not. They were well dressed and looked respectable.

This fact only convinced the detectives that they were as yet only at the beginning of the deep game which they were unraveling.

Every new development only showed that new factors were constantly appearing on the scene.

The bunco steerers were in league with the Three Fleas, the latter with other organized bands of villains. The end was remote.

It was Old King Brady's purpose to go to his lodgings.

"Certainly we can gain no more at present by chasing the Three Fleas," he said. "They are right onto us. We must wait until they are again off guard."

"And meanwhile let them follow us," said Young King Brady.

"So be it, if they wish."

"We must have our eyes open!"

Old King Brady glanced back through the car window at the two pursuers.

It was plain that they never suspected that the two detectives were aware of their purpose.

The old detective bit his lip.

He knew that this was not desirable. He resolved to shake the pursuers. So he said to Young King Brady:

"We've got to drop these fools. When the car reaches Ninth street drop off. Cut through to Sixth avenue and take a surface car for home. If they follow you, shake them with a disguise. If they don't, you'll know that I am doing the same."

"Settled!" cried Young King Brady.

He dropped off the car.

Along Ninth street he proceeded at a rapid walk. But by glancing back at intervals he saw that the two villains had not followed him.

Old King Brady still remained the object of their pursuit.

He saw this grimly and quickly formed his plan. If these two rogues flattered themselves that they could out-general the keen old fox of a detective they were certainly reckoning without a host.

At Twenty-third street the car made a spurt and got ahead of the pursuers almost a block.

Old King Brady saw that they were running. He quickly dropped off the car and turned into Twenty-fourth street.

Quick as a flash he darted into a deep hallway. At that early hour few people were abroad.

Out of his pocket came a false beard, a wig and a soft cap. Into an inner pocket went the hat.

The old blue coat was turned inside out.

In an incredible space of time this was done. The old detective was back on the sidewalk in the remarkably brief space of half a minute.

He was transformed into a bowed and grizzily-bearded old beggar. He hobbled along in the very direction from which his pursuers were coming.

In fact, just as he turned into Broadway he met them face to face.

But they hardly glanced at him.

Such a subterfuge they never dreamed of. They eagerly swept Twenty-fourth street for some sign of their bird.

Not seeing him, they ran on swiftly toward the next street, which was Fifth avenue.

Old King Brady walked down Broadway as far as Twenty-third street, coolly hopped onto another cable car and went on his way home serenely.

He had shaken his pursuers with the greatest of ease. He could not help a smile as he thought of it.

Arrived at their lodgings, Old King Brady found that Young King Brady had arrived before him.

The young detective asked eagerly:

"You shook them?"

"Easily!"

"Good! We are safe then?"

"As safe as can be."

The young detective lit a cigar and seated himself at a table with writing materials on it.

"I have been doing some careful figuring on your bluff game against the bunco steerers," he said.

"Ah," said Old King Brady, filling his pipe and sinking into an easy chair, "what do you make of it, Harry?"

"It's a sure winner!"

The old detective chuckled.

"You think so?"

"I do."

"Well, I'm about ready to agree with you. But there are conditions."

"Well?"

"We must rig matters right."

"Yes!"

"We must leave no loophole open, no string untied, no loop unhitched. Everything must run as smooth as melted butter or we're lost."

"I cannot deny that. But those are not hard conditions."

"Not for men who have their wits about them—they are not!"

"It will be a clever game. We have only to bunco the bunco steerers. That is the size of it."

"Bunco the bunco steerers themselves. That is right. But we will have to play a big bluff game to do it."

"I can bluff hard."

"I think you can. Therefore, I propose to try the game."

"Good! We will win it. But what is the first move?"

"Do you remember Moses Sharpley?"

"Sharpley? Oh, yes. A pleasant old gentleman whose stolen Government bonds we once recovered from a thief. He lives in Yonkers."

"Yes, and has a little store right on Getty Square."

"Just so. A little variety store."

"So! Now I have bought out that nice little store and am going into the store business."

Young King Brady dropped his feet from the table where they were.

He stared at Old King Brady.

The old detective's face was mobile, his gaze inscrutable. He puffed slowly at his German pipe.

Young King Brady drew a deep breath. He flicked the ashes from his cigar.

"I can't see what that has to do with this case," he said.

"No, I suppose not," replied the old detective quietly.

"Well, how should I?" said Young King Brady ambiguously. "What has it to do with it?"

"A heap!"

"Well, I never! Talk about my speaking in riddles!"

"Keep your head cool. It is a part of the bluff game."

"To buy out a variety store?"

Then something like an inkling of the old detective's game flashed into Young King Brady's mind. He drew a deep draught from his cigar.

"You shall see, my boy," said Old King Brady imperiously. "You are all right on some points, but you haven't graduated yet. You can work out a good scent and outwit the average crook, but the old man has yet to lose in the game of deep plans."

"I'll cave!" said Young King Brady. "When did you lay the wires for this?"

"A week ago."

"Have you paid money for Moses Sharpley's store?"

"Certainly not! We assume to be the proprietors for a while. Hang out our sign, and so forth. Sharpley agreed to it as a return for favors we did him. We must lose our identity for a while. Sink out of sight. We are the bunco steerers ourselves now, and our stake is a big one, you may be sure."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A BLUFF GAME.

The chief of the Secret Service had made many inquiries for the two Bradys.

He had questioned all the detectives, had vainly tried to send word to them, and really felt alarmed.

Mr. Moore was almost a daily visitor at the Secret Service headquarters.

He made inquiry invariably about the Bradys.

He felt sure that they would yet bag the bunco steerers who had so skilfully victimized him.

The chief consulted with one of the best detectives.

"Really," he said, "I fear it is serious. We know that the Artful Trio are yet working their dark schemes around New York, but the Bradys are never seen or heard from. I don't understand it."

"They may be lying low."

"All this while?" I doubt it. It would be a poor method."

"But it is quite in accordance with Old King Brady's methods." This detective was a victim of jealousy.

"Well, I expect so. But when they do appear I am sure it will be with very material results."

And so time went on.

But one day a peculiar advertisement appeared in a New York daily.

Thus it read:

"Wanted—Some wealthy and philanthropic gentleman to purchase of a widow, with the privilege of future redemption, valuable bonds of a well known corporation at a great sacrifice. Said bonds pay semi-annual dividends of ten per cent. Write or call on Mrs. M., sixth bell, apartment house No. — Sixtieth street, New York."

The next day the following advertisement appeared right below the above:

"Wanted—To inform Mrs. M., of No. — Sixtieth street, that if she will call at Jacob Schwartz's store, Getty Square, Yonkers, her request may be granted."

When the bunco steerers read this a broad smile rested on their faces.

"Heigho!" cried "Lively Ann." "We have a rural bird in hand this time. I don't mind a trip to Yonkers. Schwartz! Good old Holland name. I'll wager there is money there in plenty."

"Certainly!" agreed Corcoran. "Do you want another lame husband, Annie?"

"I'll see. I haven't matured my plans yet," replied the harp woman.

It did not take her long to form her plans, however.

The result was that the next day she took a morning train for Yonkers.

It was easy to find the store of Jacob Schwartz on Getty square.

A respectable appearing lady in widow's weeds entered the shop. A young clerk with stunning features stood behind the counter.

"Vat can I do for you, madam?" he asked with a Dutch accent.

"I called in response to this advertisement," she said in low tone. "I am Mrs. Miller, of Sixtieth street, New York. Are you Mr. Jacob Schwartz?"

"Oh, dear no, madam," replied the young man. "I am not your zoon. I vill call mine fader."

And he dodged out of sight behind a curtain into an inner room.

"Lively Ann" sat down.

Her eyes roamed curiously over the store and its contents. It did not differ from any other store of its class.

A moment more, however, and a tall, kindly-featured Hollander stood before her.

"Ah, madam," he said with a simple and artless manner. "I read your request in der paper and I felt so veery sorry for you dat I told mine zoon I wouldt write you."

"You are kind, good sir!" said the pseudo Mrs. Miller in a piping voice. "I have great need of assistance, or I could never part with the bonds which my dear dead husband left me."

Good Herr Schwartz nervously wrung his hands.

"Ah, gude vrow, do not complain," he said sympathetically. "You shall not be cheated. I haf given my vord. You shall haf more dan you ask. I vill lend you dat money

and you shall keep dot interest of ten per cent. for yourself."

"Oh, no, no!" protested the tearful widow. "I could not think of that. But you will give me a chance to redeem them?"

"I weel, certainly."

"I thank you."

"Haf you de bonds wit you?"

The widow drew a packet of papers from her satchel.

"They are here," she said. "They are the bonds of the Far West Gas Company, of Smartville, Wisconsin. If you wish I can bring my banker to vouch for them."

Under his stunted beard the disguised detective smiled broadly.

But he affected deep interest and examined the certificates.

They were the counterpart of those which had deceived Banker Moore.

"Umph!" exclaimed Schwartz, as he glanced over them. "Dey be all right, madam. I see no trouble. But I haf not so much money to-day."

"Oh, I am not in a hurry," replied the widow in sprightly fashion. "You can have the money ready any day you may name, and I will call. The sum is sixty thousand dollars."

"Ah, eef you put these bonds on the market you might get a larger sum for dem!"

"But I do not want to sell," replied the widow. "They were left me by my dear husband, and I wish to always keep them if possible."

Schwartz rubbed his hands and nodded spasmodically.

"I see, madam!" he cried. "You shall leave dem. No?"

"I must take them with me, but I will bring them back after making the transfer," declared the widow. "What day shall I call, dear Mr. Schwartz?"

The Hollander bowed with his hand on his heart.

"To-morrow eef you desire."

"To-morrow at three!"

"An' bring your banker, madam."

"I will."

Mrs. Miller, with a great load apparently lifted from her sorrow-weighted soul, picked up her bonds and departed.

When she had gone Jacob Schwartz & Son laughed until the tears rolled down their faces.

"How could you deceive the fair widow?" roared Young King Brady. "The homeless and the friendless. Ah, you heartless man!"

"Be not too sure," said Old King Brady shrewdly. "She is deceiving us, and may yet do so with complete success."

"Lively Ann" went back to New York and her compatriots in Forty-fourth street.

She was in high spirits.

"He was the easiest thing I have struck!" she cried. "Dear me, but it is a walkover. I am to call to-morrow with my banker!"

"Me!" said Corcoran.

"You!"

"You are sure it's straight?"

"Straight as a black line. A dear old duck of a Hollander. I'd trifle with his heart if there was not so much at stake. Oh, it is a rich haul!"

Corcoran and Hardy laughed.

All felt gay and glib.

Several bottles of champagne were popped on the strength of the prospect.

The next day "Lively Ann," Corcoran and Hardy all boarded a train for Yonkers.

Hardy accompanied the pair to officiate as secretary to the pseudo banker, Mr. Wellington Hall. The distinguished trio entered Mr. Schwartz's shop exactly at the appointed time.

He looked with surprise at the two men, but bowed affably as the pseudo Mrs. Miller introduced them.

"Mr. Wellington Hall, my banker, and Mr. Leeds, his secretary."

"I am happy!" said Jacob, bowing low. "I veel be glad eef you come into my private room!"

The three bunco steerers, exchanging winks, entered the little square room back of the shop.

They were quickly seated at a table.

Schwartz left the room for a moment. "Lively Ann" gave her companions the wink and whispered:

"Nice old duck, eh?"

"He's a peach," said Corcoran. "I wonder if we couldn't pull him for a side issue?"

"Make sure of this deal first," admonished Hardy. "That is best!"

At this moment Schwartz came back.

"Ah, mine frendts," he said, rubbing his hands, "I believe we are now ready for business."

He carried a long leather pocketbook in his hand.

As he opened it a number of documents fell out. There was a bundle of coupon bonds.

They bore the stamp of Uncle Sam and were handsomely printed. But they represented only a small sum.

The bunco steerers eyed the papers as wolves will watch their prey. Old King Brady smiled under his beard.

He turned the papers over and picked up a blank check. It was on the Bank of New York.

"Now, madam," he said simply, "you shall tell me about dis Far West Gas Company. You say it ees all right."

"You may ask Mr. Hall, my banker, who is an authority on stocks," replied "Lively Ann."

"The best dividend paying stock in America," declared Hall emphatically.

"Ah, dat is enough, madam. I vill write you my check now for thirty thousand dollars, an' you shall haf dem stock certificates back shoost ven you may vant to call for dem."

"You are very kind, my dear Mr. Schwartz," said "Lively Ann," feigning emotion. "I feel sure they will be safe in your hands."

"As safe as could nefer be," asserted Schwartz.

"One moment," said Hall blandly. "You mistake the amount. These bonds call for sixty instead of thirty thousand dollars!"

"Oh, yes!" said "Lively Ann."

Schwartz's eyes opened wide.

"Mein Gott!" he exclaimed, "dat is more money den I haf got!"

"What?"

The exclamation burst simultaneously from the lips of all three bunco steerers. For the fraction of a second consternation showed in their faces.

It was almost a betrayal.

But instantly they recovered.

"Thirty thousand," said Hall brusquely. "Well, that is hardly adequate. However, if you say so, Mrs. Miller——"

"I—I hope there is nothing wrong!" faltered the widow.

"Oh, no, madam, I assure you!" cried Schwartz. "It ees mine leetle meestake. I haf only thirty thousand dollars in money. But I haf the equivalent. See! here are mortgages! Notes! Ach! here is van here against mine dear friendt, Breitstein, for dat same amount. You shall see. I vill get dot money of him. Myndert! I say, Myndert!"

In response to the call young Schwartz appeared from an inner room.

"Myndert, mine zoon, vill you step out an' ask Herr Breitstein to come in a moment?"

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BUNCO GAME THAT FAILED TO WORK.

"All right, fader!" replied Myndert and vanished.

The faces of the bunco steerers cleared. The outlook was better.

It seemed a certainty that they would get their sixty thousand after all. They would have taken the thirty thousand rather than nothing, however.

Some time passed.

Herr Schwartz proved a pleasant conversationalist, and kept his visitors entertained until suddenly a man came into the store.

He was not quite so tall as Herr Schwartz, but he was plainly a Hollander. He was Herr Breitstein.

He was briefly introduced, and then Herr Schwartz recited to him the story of the widow's needs, and presented to him the note for payment.

"Ach, mein Gott!" he cried, holding up his hands. "I haf not dot much money, friendt Schwartz. I haf only a cashier's check on dot New Amsterdam Bank for one hundred and twenty t'ousand dollars."

"Let me see your cashier's check," said Wellington Hall, the pseudo banker.

Herr Breitstein drew a long leather book from his pocket and produced the check.

It was examined by the bunco steerers. They had no doubt that it was genuine.

It did not once occur to them as at all strange that these simple merchants should deal so largely in money.

They knew that people of this class are hoarders, and in

many cases the humblest Dutch or German shop keepers have immense fortunes stored away.

It looked to them like a dead certainty. Herr Schwartz was looking at them over his spectacles in his most bland manner.

"Vell, shentlemens," he said, "vat do you say to dis check?"

"It is all right," said Wellington Hall. "We will ke it."

Herr Breitstein looked puzzled. Then he said:

"Mein Herr Schwartz, I only owe you sixty thousand illsars."

This was true. It was easy for the bunco steerers to see at here was another difficulty. Sixty thousand dollars change for the cashier's check of one hundred and twenty ousand dollars must be returned to Breitstein.

They looked at Schwartz.

He looked at them.

Then Hall looked at his watch.

It was after four o'clock.

All banks were closed.

It was impossible to cash the check until the following y.

"Wait until to-morrow," said Schwartz. "You shall haf e money den."

Now, all three of the bunco steerers knew the fatality of ocrastination. Before another day many things might ppen.

There might come a slip.

There is no time like the present in bunco games. Men ange their minds in the course of a night and a day.

So Hall looked at the pseudo Mrs. Miller and said:

"I—I think we had better settle the matter to-day. My ne is valuable. I cannot come to Yonkers to-morrow."

"But we cannot settle it to-day," declared Schwartz. "I ust give Herr Breitstein his money."

"Will he not wait?"

"Dot does not help it. You may haf dis cashier's check r one hundred and twenty t'ousand dollars if you haf sixty t'ousand—de deference. You see?"

Herr Breitstein was impatient. The bunco steerers oked at each other.

Hall again examined the check.

"It is not my business," he said, "but to accommodate rs. Miller I will advance the sixty thousand dollars to r."

"Ah, dat is all right. Den it ees settled," said Herr hwartz with beaming face.

"Before I pay it, though, I would like a few words with rs. Miller," said Hall.

The two withdrew to a corner of the room.

When they returned Hall counted out upon the table ty thousand dollars in bank notes.

They were the very notes paid him on Moore's check at e New York bank. Herr Breitstein laboriously counted em.

Then the papers were made out transferring the gas nds to Herr Schwartz. Herr Breitstein with a receipt om Schwartz took his departure.

All was regular.

All was seemingly straight.

Mrs. Miller thanked Herr Schwartz.

Then the bunco steerers departed with the cashier's check on the New Amsterdam Bank for one hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

What a haul!

Sixty thousand dollars clear!

Sixty thousand for a few pieces of worthless paper! They had no doubt of their success.

Dutchmen are slow.

Dead slow!

Herr Schwartz would not find out that the bonds were bogus for perhaps months. At least not until dividends were due.

The cashier's check should be cashed the next morning when the bank opened its doors.

"What do you think?" chuckled Corcoran.

"The best deal we ever made," said Hardy.

"Am I not a gay widow?" asked Ann.

Thus they jested and traveled back to New York. Behind them as they left the Schwartz store a curious scene was being enacted.

Herr Breitstein had gone out the front door, only to come in at the back.

The two jolly Dutchmen laughed and counted the sixty thousand dollars.

The buncoers were buncoed.

"Well! well!" cried Old King Brady. "What a stroke of business. We bluffed them right of their money!"

"I feared they would not come to the mark, at one time," said Young King Brady, whom the reader, of course, knows as Herr Breitstein and also Myndert.

"Well!" cried Old King Brady, "we have got Mr. Moore's money back. Now we have only to pick up the buncoers and put them behind bars!"

"Good!"

"We have evidence enough to lock them up for twenty years!"

"I believe it!"

"We shall not soon forget, nor will they, the bunco game that failed to work."

"Or the Bradys' great bluff!"

"Ha—ha—ha!"

Old King Brady stepped to a speaking tube connecting with apartments above. He blew the whistle.

"Mr. Sharpley!" he shouted.

"All right," replied the shop keeper.

"Our game is finished. We turn your shop over to you!"

An hour later the two Bradys were on their way back to New York. If the bunco steerers could have seen them then they would have been surprised and discomfited indeed.

That night the two Bradys perfected plans for the capture of the three bunco steerers.

Officers were detailed to wait at the door of the New Amsterdam Bank.

When Corcoran should appear to cash the big check he would be arrested at once.

Other police were in a cordon about the house in Forty-fourth street.

There seemed little doubt that the career of the Artful Trio would speedily be brought to an end.

The two detectives separated.

One waited at the door of the bank and the other at the Forty-fourth street house. The morning passed and noon came.

Then a messenger boy entered the bank.

He thrust a package through the rail at the cashier's desk.

The cashier opened a letter, and a check purporting to be signed by himself, for one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, fell out.

He instantly recognized it and gazed at the boy sharply, for Old King Brady had made the previous arrangement with the cashier.

A letter was with the check.

Thus it read:

"To the Cashier:

"Please pay to the bearer the enclosed amount. He will carry a leather bag, which lock and seal. Yours,

"WELLINGTON HALL."

At once the cashier stepped to the window and made a sign to the detective.

The boy was taken into a private office. His story was straight.

He had been summoned by the clerk of the North River Hotel, in West street, who had turned him over to a man with a long beard.

He had been directed to go to the bank and return.

That was all.

Old King Brady's face fell.

"Hard luck!" he said. "The game is not bagged yet!"

Secretly he wondered how Corcoran had tumbled to the game. That he was only suspicious, however, was evidenced in the fact that he had ventured upon the effort to cash the check.

The only thing left to be done now was to let the messenger boy return to the North River Hotel with the money presumably in the bag.

But this resulted in nothing.

Corcoran had followed the boy.

At a safe distance he had seen the detectives enter the bank.

Then he had fled.

No clew could be found.

Old King Brady went quickly over to Forty-fourth street. The house was surrounded and entered.

But not the least trace of the bunco steerers was found. The furnishings were there, but the occupants gone.

They would not return.

The game was up.

Once more the detectives were at sea. The bunco steerers had eluded them most skilfully.

How they had got warning of the failure of their game it was impossible to guess.

The two Bradys were chagrined.

But they kept low.

They knew that their work must all be done over again. But this did not discourage them.

One thing they had accomplished.

They had recovered the money lost by Mr. Moore. They proceeded to return to him at once.

The banker was delighted.

He regarded the two Bradys as literal detective marvels. He could not sing their praises loudly enough.

But now a new factor appeared to give the Bradys exciting work. The Three Fleas had by no means abandoned their purpose to wreak vengeance upon the two detectives.

It was possible that the Artful Trio had joined forces with this interesting gang, in which case there was lively work ahead.

But Old King Brady went on as cool and methodical as ever. No rebuff disheartened him.

He knew that time and proper effort would bring the gang to the wall. He kept straight.

And presently developments of an exciting kind began to come along thick and fast.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### OLD KING BRADY'S CHASE.

Working upon the assumption that the Three Fleas and the bunco steerers had joined forces the Bradys now haunted the slums once more.

They felt sure that "Lively Ann" and her two companions were somewhere in hiding in New York.

To round them up would be no easy matter, for it was certain that they would keep out of the way of the detectives for some time to come.

It was easy to assume that they had a more wholesome respect for the Bradys since the bluff so successfully worked by them.

Old King Brady had decided upon a change of plan for the future.

Thus far the two detectives had worked on the bunco case in company.

Now the old detective decided to give Young King Brady one end of the case, while he would take the other.

"All right," said the young detective. "I'll hold my end up."

"I know you will," said Old King Brady.

"What end of the case will you take?"

"The Three Fleas."

"Good! I will take the Artful Trio."

And so it was settled.

Old King Brady now made himself up for a genuine type of Bowery lounge. Then he dropped into the slums and became a fixture there.

He hung around bar rooms, pawned various articles and went about trying to dispose of the tickets.

He slept in twenty-five-cent hotels; ate, or pretended

in Beefsteak John restaurants, and, in fact, identified himself completely with Bowery life.

He knew that sooner or later such a course must bear fruit.

As all roads once led to Rome, so all New York's crooks are sooner or later sure to turn up in the Bowery.

Among the lower types of criminals there are none whom a New York detective may not ultimately trace by simply haunting the resorts of New York's famous thoroughfare.

Days passed without result.

But Old King Brady was patient.

That was one of his traits.

He watched and waited, and studied every face, and traced down every shadow of a clew.

And finally he once more got track of the Three Fleas.

One night he was coming out of Chatham Square when a startling incident occurred.

The hour was past midnight and respectable pedestrians were mostly wending their way homeward. But they were few in number.

Suddenly in a patch of gloom under the Third avenue elevated structure Old King Brady saw a number of shadowy forms.

There were the sounds of a scuffle, a hoarse, smothered cry, and then a human body fell athwart the curbstone.

A gurgling sound reached the detective's ears and a policeman's whistle sounded. Nothing more was needed.

Old King Brady was in the game.

In an instant he was on the spot.

At the same moment two officers came up. One sprang down and lifted the unknown from the gutter.

Blood was on his face, and he was unconscious. His appearance was that of a man in good circumstances. Doubtless he was a stranger in the city.

"Who is it, Jack?" asked the first officer.

"Don't know."

"It looks like the work of the Three Fleas."

"That's it!"

"Ring up an ambulance."

"Then he's alive?"

"Yes; but he won't be long if he don't have help."

This was all that Old King Brady waited to hear. The shadowy figures had vanished down a side street.

The old detective was upon their track like a sleuth-hound.

In one swift glance he took in the street, the possibilities of escape and the natural avenues therefor.

Then he ran without hesitation through an open gate and into an area between two buildings.

He had not seen the three crooks run into this place.

But he had seen that it was the only logical avenue of escape. The block was too long for them to have covered it in that short space of time.

Into the vacant area the detective dashed. For a moment the gloom prevented his taking in all objects.

The buildings were dwellings.

A high iron fence separated two yards. It would have been difficult to scale this.

The detective dropped that theory.

Then he saw the lower rounds of a fire escape against the side of one of the buildings.

He followed it up to the roof critically with his eye. Against the sky he saw a dusky figure.

It was visible only an instant.

The detective waited for no more.

Up the iron fire escape he went like an agile monkey in spite of his age. Up he went rapidly.

But just before he reached the upper landing he glanced up.

It was lucky that he did so.

A man's shoulders and muffled face jutted out over the edge of the roof. Down with force came a brick hurled with all strength.

If it had struck the detective he would have been seriously if not fatally injured.

It struck one of the rounds of the ladder and flew into pieces. The old detective whipped out his revolver and fired.

But the fugitive had vanished.

The bullet struck the gutter and rattled down a lot of lime and dust. That was all.

The detective now sprang upon the roof. He looked about him.

The fugitives had vanished.

But Old King Brady did not lose time. He dashed away across the roof at full speed.

From one housetop to another he went. Then far ahead he saw three flying figures.

Drawing his revolver, Old King Brady opened fire upon them.

He did not take accurate aim, for he wished to take the birds alive. It was his belief that the shots would bring them to terms.

But in that instant the three fugitives disappeared. Astounded at the suddenness of the thing, the old detective kept on, however.

He reached the spot where they had last been seen.

It was at a point where three buildings met in an angle, leaving a vacant triangular space between them.

To cross to the next building meant a leap of four or five feet. They had certainly not done this.

The old detective looked about in mystification. He saw no skylight or chimney near.

Swiftly he studied every chance and every point. Nothing escaped him.

Yet he was baffled.

He could see no chance for concealment or escape. What then had become of the villains?

He knelt down and carefully examined the roof with his hands. It was tinned and perfectly smooth.

Along the roof he crept until he reached the edge. He lay flat on his stomach and looked over this.

There was a fancy iron fretwork under the steel gutter which ran along the edge of the roof.

Dangling from this in the night wind was an object.

The detective reached down and grasped it with his hand.

He drew it up.

It was a rope ladder.

Here was the explanation.

The rest was easy.

Five feet beneath the gutter pipe was a window, one of a row extending along the back face of the building.

This window was open.

The crooks had no doubt slid down on the rope ladder and entered the building by means of this window.

The detective hesitated a moment.

He raised himself and looked again about the roof. Then he swung himself over the edge.

He grasped the rope ladder and began to lower himself. In a few moments he was at the ledge of the open window.

It was a very easy matter to swing himself over this and into the building. Beyond that window all was blackness.

To the detective it was a risky feat.

For aught he knew, lurking in that pitchy blackness was a horrible death.

But his feet struck the floor and he crouched there.

He listened intently and tried to pierce the gloom. But in vain.

No sound broke the stillness.

If the fugitives were in the place they were extremely still. Old King Brady soon regained assurance.

He drew a pocket lantern from his coat. It took but a moment for him to light it.

Then he flashed its rays about the room in which he was.

He received a startling surprise.

It was well furnished, with chairs, a table, a bureau and a bed, and the bed held a sleeping occupant.

It was a man.

The detective flashed the light in his face. He had never seen him before. He was doubtless an inmate of the house.

He, of course, had no idea that his room had been invaded by thugs pursued by a detective. All this was lost in the realm of dreams.

"Humph!" thought Old King Brady, "they might have murdered him. Ugh!"

The last exclamation was caused by a sudden awful discovery.

The detective noted that the sleeping man did not respire either audibly or to the eye perceptible.

Struck by this fact, the detective leaned forward. A horrible discovery was made.

On the white coverlet was a jellied pool of blood. Under the coverlet was the handle of a dagger.

This was sunk to the hilt in the breast of the man in the bed.

He was dead!

It was murder!

Old King Brady was a man used to the hard side of life. But, in spite of himself, he drew back, sick and faint with this awful discovery.

What was the crime perpetrated for?

Who was the murdered man?

Had the assassins just accomplished their awful deed? Had it been done for fear he would wake and give the alarm?

Or was plunder the object?

All these queries flashed through Old King Brady's

brain. Then he leaned forward and placed a hand on the brow of the corpse.

It was warm and moist.

He had not been dead long.

At that instant soft footsteps sounded outside the room door, and it swung open.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE FATE OF THE "THREE FLEAS."

Old King Brady acted with the quickness of thought.

He sank down behind the bed and extinguished his lantern.

He was none too soon.

Dark figures glided into the chamber.

He saw one of them go to the window. Then he heard a hoarse whisper:

"I tell ye, Brick, we'll run into the fox of a detective."

"All right, Ted; it'll be as good a time as any to slit his gullet with a knife."

"We don't have any luck at that."

"He has a charmed life!"

"I believe it."

The detective slid noiselessly lower until he was actually under the bed. Then he felt safe.

"Jason, ye're sure that covey in the bed is dead?"

"Dead as a herrin', Brick!"

"He didn't make any fuss."

"Wall, he didn't hev time."

"Do ye know him?"

"His name is Peter Burns. He runs a Bowery shoe shop. Oh, I don't reckon he's got much of a fortune. The money you got outen his clothes is about all he'd likely have."

"Ugh! Strike up yer lantern, Ted. That's better, I reckon."

Light now filled the room. One of the crooks had a lantern.

Old King Brady knew that these three rogues were the notorious Fleas who had for so long evaded the police.

He was determined that they should not escape him.

They should pay for this awful crime in a fitting manner. He kept perfectly quiet and awaited his chance.

"How many families are in this house, Ted?"

"I kain't say, Brick. They're all roomers."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yaas, I reckon."

"D'ye s'pose any of 'em heard us when we cum in?"

"Naw! Nobody in a lodgin' house pays any attention ter noise. We might make any amount of racket and none of ther lodgers would trouble us. They are ther best people in ther world for mindin' their own business."

Old King Brady knew this was true.

He also knew that this meant that he must depend wholly on his own resources in bagging these terrible murderers.

For he had a deadly determination to wind up their career this very night or lose his life in the attempt. So he watched them closely from his position under the eaves. He could see their faces plainly. Hideous and cruel were the expressions. The Misérables of Paris, as described by the great French author, could outclass these disreputable scavengers of New York. Barton was searching the dead man's clothes for valuables. Hurley was inspecting the bureau drawers, while Hart kept a close watch at the window. Finally Hurley said: "What shall we do? Kin we git out of ther house by n' downstairs?" "Cert!" replied Barton. "On ther way down we might enter another room. It's too good a chance ter lose." The detective's eyes flashed. He made a silent writhing movement to emerge from beneath the bed. He did not intend that the villains should go down through the house, with the possibility of another murder, if he could help it. Suddenly Hart at the window whispered in an alarmed manner: "Hist! I hear footsteps!" "Whar?" asked Hurley. "On ther roof!" "The divil! It's old Brady hisself. Douse ther glimmer let him come in. We'll salt him!" But went the light. The detective saw the three figures silhouetted at the window. It was his moment. Swiftly and noiselessly he crept out and reached the door. In his hand he held a revolver. He placed his back against the door. Then he produced his own lantern and pulled the slide. The light was focused on the trio. The effect was startling beyond description. The three wretches turned as by one common impulse. There they crouched at the window ledge like three wild beasts. Dreadful was the expression of their crime-hardened faces in the light of the detective's dark lantern. Words are almost inadequate to depict that situation. The Three Fleas were cornered. They saw the barrel of the deadly revolver covering them. An attempt to move meant death! For Old King Brady would have killed any one of them with as little compunction as he would have destroyed a rat. But this alone did not deter the wretches from an attempt to escape through the window. The sounds on the roof warned them that some other danger was near. There might have been some midnight prowler of their own kind, but more likely it was another detective or police officer. They were between two fires. For a full half minute the tableau lasted. The detective did not speak, nor did the trio.

Not until full thirty seconds had elapsed, and then Barton hissed:

"Curse it! Old King Brady!"

The old detective looked like a statue carved out of stone as he stood with his back to the door.

"You dogs have run your race!" he said in a metallic voice. "The last human life you have taken shall send you all three to your end, and a fitting punishment. If you had rather die now under the pistol, move a hand or foot!"

What the sensations of the three villains were can only be guessed.

But they were too hardened and crafty to abandon hope, and their cunning brains were busy.

"We cave!" snarled Barton. "What do ye want us fer, Brady?"

"The category is too long to enumerate," replied Old King Brady. "Barton, put on these wristers."

The old detective placed his lantern on the table and threw a pair of handcuffs onto the floor.

"Eh?" said Barton stupidly. "What did ye say?"

"Put those on, and properly. If you don't I'll shoot you like a dog!"

Barton reached forward to pick up the handcuffs. Slowly he extended himself along the floor.

Then Hurley made a slight movement.

It diverted Old King Brady's attention for the smallest fraction of a second. But this was enough.

Like the flash of a tiger's lithe body Barton shot forward toward the detective.

Crack!

The pistol spoke.

An awful yell of pain went up.

Barton fell in a writhing heap, but Hurley and Hart had acted at the same moment.

One sprang to the right and one to the left. Hurley struck the dark lantern and dashed it under the bed.

Hart leaped clear over the bed with its gruesome occupant, and leaped upon Old King Brady.

Crack! crack!

The pistol spoke. But in the darkness no aim could be taken. Old King Brady's right arm was seized, and the next instant he was grappling with his deadly foes.

A terrific struggle followed.

Barton lay in a wounded heap in the middle of the floor. The combatants rolled over him.

Old King Brady was a strong man in a fight. Few could worst him.

But it was two to one, and the Fleas were terrible fighters. Several times Old King Brady felt the point of a knife at his side, but each time by a superhuman effort he twisted the powerful wrist of his foe aside.

But so desperate a combat could not last forever.

In the order of nature it must soon come to a decisive point.

But just as Old King Brady felt the deadly faintness of complete exhaustion overpowering him there appeared on the sill of the window a lithe form.

Down into the chamber it dropped.

The overturned lantern gave yet a sickly, pale light.

It was enough to show the newcomer Old King Brady's powerful form yielding to the two thugs.

Swift as a flash the newcomer took part in the game.

A terrific blow on the skull laid Hurley out senseless. The affair was then quickly terminated.

Hart's murderous knife was dashed from his grip and he was held firmly to the floor.

He foamed at the mouth and fought madly, but in vain.

Handcuffs held his arms behind him and his ankles were tied. Then Hurley was secured the same way.

By this time hurrying footsteps and loud exclamations were heard outside the door.

People in the house had been aroused and the police had come.

Into the room they rushed with lights. The scene was a terrible one.

But in the centre of the room Old King Brady now for the first time saw who had come to his assistance at so fortunate and critical a moment.

It was Young King Brady.

There was no time for explanations just then.

The prisoners were turned over to the police. The two Bradys were then for a long time in conference with the police captain in the murdered man's room.

At a later hour the coroner arrived and took charge of the place.

Then the police went away and the two Bradys disappeared.

The next morning the newspapers heralded the exciting affair in the Chatham Square house.

It was known from one end of New York to the other that the Three Fleas had at last fallen into the clutches of the law.

It was easy to predict their fate.

They would be summarily dealt with. If one of them escaped the death chair he would be lucky.

The effect of this bit of news upon the bunco steerers, or the Artful Trio, could only be imagined.

Their plot against the life of Old King Brady had certainly resulted in a dismal failure.

But the two detectives had not as yet accomplished their prime purpose, which was the capture of the bunco steerers.

Young King Brady's experience, however, in tracking them had not been without good results.

In fact, he had been close on their track only a short while before the turn of events which had so luckily happened in his coming to Old King Brady's rescue.

## CHAPTER XV.

### YOUNG KING BRADY'S RUSE.

Young King Brady had not been idle all the days that the older detective was haunting the Bowery.

He had assumed his task of looking up the Artful Trio in a zealous spirit.

The young detective's plans were all in keeping with accustomed originality and shrewdness.

He had an exact picture of Simeon Hardy in his mind.

He had noted carefully every detail of his makeup, even to the color and texture and cut of his clothes.

Young King Brady was about the size and build of Hardy.

He proceeded at once to very cleverly make himself for Hardy.

He was completely successful.

Dress, features and even the peculiar walk of the bunco steerer were very cleverly imitated.

It was an original idea.

It certainly was a clever one, and, as incidents soon proved, effective.

Having succeeded in thus disguising himself, the young detective next laid his plans cleverly.

He knew that the bunco steerers were in hiding in the quarter of the city in which the Three Fleas held forth.

This was the region contiguous to Chatham Square and the Five Points and vicinity.

He accordingly proceeded to haunt certain east side saloons and resorts. One evening he dropped into a music hall.

He had just called for a glass of beer as a blind when he heard a purring voice behind him:

"Hullo, Sim! What are you doing here?"

Young King Brady looked up.

A woman stood over him.

For a moment he was thrilled.

It was Ann Prentiss.

"Lively Ann" did not for an instant suspect the identity of Young King Brady. She sank into a seat at his table.

"I'll have sherry, Sim!" she said.

"Sherry for one!" said Young King Brady to the waiter.

Then he avoided the woman's gaze and pretended to finish his beer. She seemed to be laboring under some emotion.

"Sim," she said in a whisper, "aren't we taking chances here?"

"Ugh!" grunted the pseudo bunco steerer. "I'd like to know how?"

"How?" repeated "Lively Ann." "Why, the foxes, Bradys, might happen in here at any moment, and then where would we be?"

"They'll not tackle me and live to tell of it!"

"But the odds, you know. The police would have both before we could get out of here. Oh, I tell you, it's risky. I know you like your beer, and——"

She leaned forward and put a soft hand on Young King Brady's shoulder.

"You know I love you, Simeon. I never loved any man before. We are to be married, you know——"

"Don't tell all New York of it!" said the young detective, feigning irritation.

"Oh, Simeon," said the confidence woman in an emotional tone, "don't take any chances. We ought to leave this country to-day."

"To-day?"

"Yes. I have a good fortune, and it is all yours."

ll go to gay Paris, to the Riviera. We will see the world!"

"And the world will see us!"

She drew back pettishly.

"You are horrid to-night, Sim," she said.

"I don't like love-making in public."

"Then let us go home. I know that Con is waiting at the room to see you. Will you go?"

Young King Brady experienced a thrill.

Here was a development he was unprepared for. A daring plan flashed across his mind.

If it succeeded the game was won.

If it failed. He shivered as he thought of the possible sequences. But the young detective was not the one to waver a white feather.

So he said:

"All right, Annie. We'll go home and talk it all over!"

They arose and Ann led the way out of the music hall.

In the street they made their way through the jostling crowd and turned into a dingy thoroughfare leading toward the docks.

From this they entered a narrow alley and crossed a back court.

Then they ascended the stoop of a dilapidated dwelling.

Ann opened the door and they were in a dark hallway.

The young detective's nerves were tingling.

He was in the den of the bunco steerers.

Here was where they had been hiding since the betrayal of their Forty-fourth street house.

Young King Brady knew full well the awful risk of the dangerous game he was playing.

He knew that he was taking his life literally into his hands.

Failure meant death.

But he was resolved to succeed. Certainly no detective would undertake a more daring coup. His nerves were steel.

Ann led him along the dark passage.

Through a transom over a door he saw a glimmer of light.

In the room beyond, what should he find? Corcoran undoubtedly there. But what if Hardy was, too?

What would be the result?

The young detective felt for his revolver. It might be necessary to draw quickly. He was ready.

"Lively Ann" pushed open the door and they were again in a blaze of light.

The room revealed was furnished fairly well.

In an easy chair under a shade lamp a single occupant sat engaged in reading.

Young King Brady felt a thrill.

It was not Hardy!

It was Corcoran.

The bunco steerer turned his head, and at sight of them started testily:

"Well, Sim Hardy, I've waited here a long while to see you."

"Where did you find him, Sis?"

"He came across him in a music hall," replied "Lively Ann."

"He didn't want to come home."

"In a music hall?" gasped Corcoran, aghast. "Well, I don't know what! Exposing us all in such a reckless fashion!"

Young King Brady made a great bluff.

He yawned, strode to the fireplace and lit a cigarette. Then he yawned again.

"What do ye want to see me about?" he asked.

"Why, that matter we were talking about the other night."

The detective shivered.

His ingenuity was taxed.

But he managed to say:

"Well, what do you decide?"

"Decide? Why, it is for you to decide!"

"Of course. Oh, yes."

"Well, what do you say?"

"I can't tell you to-night."

"Can't tell me to-night? Why put it off? It is an easy matter. Speak right out!"

"But I must have more time to think—that is, allowing that it will not interfere with the plan."

"Time to think? Plan? Why, what are you talking about? I believe you have been drinking, sir. None but a fool would get drunk at such a critical time."

"Critical time?" said Young King Brady, grasping vainly for a clue to aid him. "You're always borrowing trouble. Always talking about a critical time."

Corcoran stared at the presumed Hardy and then at "Lively Ann."

The woman, however, in her wheedling way came to the rescue.

"Sim is awful tired to-night," she simpered. "Don't tax him with anything of a perplexing sort."

"But I tell you we've got to settle it!" roared Corcoran.

"The longer we stay in the country now the nearer we shall come to the death chair. It's waiting for us!"

"All right," said Young King Brady, suddenly grasping a theory. "When do you propose to leave?"

"Have you entirely forgotten our talk of the other night?"

"No!" roared Young King Brady, for he felt that it would be fatal to drop the bluff.

"Then what are you hedging for? I tell you we've got to do it!"

"I'll agree."

"That settles it!" said Corcoran with alacrity. "We won't quarrel further. I suppose you and Annie will hitch up?"

"Likely," said Young King Brady at a venture. The woman threw her arms about his neck.

The young detective gave her a squeeze.

"There, that will do!" he said. "It's all settled."

"You haven't said anything yet about the money," cried Corcoran.

"Oh, dear!" thought Young King Brady. "What is coming next?" Aloud he cried: "Oh, confound your money. I don't want it. All I want is Ann!"

Now both the woman and Corcoran looked startled.

The latter rose to his feet.

"Hardy, you're crazy!" he cried. "What has come over you? You don't act natural."

Again the woman, Ann Prentiss, came to Young King Brady's rescue. She turned on Corcoran like a tigress.

"You let him alone!" she cried, with flashing eyes. "He is not feeling well. You shall not persecute him!"

"I am beginning to think you are both fools!" said Corcoran contemptuously. "You're the most lovesick pair I ever saw. Go and get married and be done with it!"

"No, no!" said Young King Brady, putting "Lively Ann" aside. "Let us discuss matters calmly. It is agreed that we have found it too warm in New York."

"Now you're talking sense," said Corcoran readily.

Young King Brady felt that he had struck the right chord.

"Good!" he rejoined. "Shall we separate in going abroad?"

"Of course!" cried Corcoran. "Just as we planned the other night. Before we go we must aim a revengeful blow at the two Bradys. They must pay for their interference in our affairs!"

"Exactly!"

"If we can get them in the right place one blow would do it. It will be murder, and we shall have to skip the country. But that is all right. Ten years abroad won't hurt us, and when we come back we shall be better prepared than ever for a renewal of business!"

"Capital!" affirmed Young King Brady. "Now the matter is all settled, let me propose a plan for entrapping the two Bradys."

Corcoran and the woman looked expectant.

It was a great moment.

Young King Brady had seized the dilemma by the horns and began to foresee wonderful results.

It looked at that moment as if chance had put a great opportunity into his hands.

But before he could make use of it an unlooked-for fatality happened.

Suddenly footsteps sounded outside the door of the room.

The door swung open.

The scene which ensued baffles portrayal. On the threshold stood the double of the man whom "Lively Ann" and Corcoran were waiting to hear speak.

It was Simeon Hardy himself.

## CHATER XVI.

### IN THE TOILS.

In all his career Young King Brady had never faced a more thrilling situation than this.

The expression upon the faces of the three bunco steerers was beyond description.

Simeon Hardy stared at Young King Brady and all stared at him.

Then Corcoran looked from one to the other.

An oath dropped from his lips.

"What is this?" he hissed.

"Treachery!"

"We are betrayed!"

"It's that cursed detective!"

Young King Brady, with a quick backward step, placed himself against the wall of the room.

His revolver was gripped in his right hand.

"Yes!" he said coolly. "It is one of the Bradys. I am here for your timely arrival, Simeon Hardy, the sequel would have been far different."

The bunco steerers were not only for the moment astonished, but terrified.

That they should have been readily duped dazed they did not know. In that moment they saw the verge of the awful pit into which they had almost walked.

Into the minds of the three there crept a question. Were these detectives omnipotent? Were they aided by supernatural power?

They seemed to have the happy faculty of omnipresence and a divination far beyond human ken. Was it feasible to attempt to cope with such irresistible power?

But this was succeeded by blind rage and hatred.

They turned on the young detective like human wolves. Had he been unarmed his fate would have been speedily settled.

But they looked into the muzzle of the deadly revolver and paused.

"Brady," said Corcoran tensely, "what does this mean? What do you want here?"

"You!" replied the young detective in a steely voice. "I intend to put you behind bars!"

Corcoran bit his bloodless lip and laughed fiendishly.

"That is well enough to say," he said tensely. "But there is one thing you may depend. You shall not go from here alive!"

"That remains to be seen."

"How can you expect to escape? You are in our clutches and we are three to one!"

"A movement to attack me will make you one less!" said the young detective.

"But it would mean your death!"

"I am not so sure!"

Corcoran looked at Hardy. The latter had a cold gleam in his eyes. He still stood in the doorway.

Young King Brady watched them narrowly. Not the slightest move escaped his vigilant gaze.

He knew that he had by no means the best end of the situation.

Corcoran and "Lively Ann" would have been easy game.

But Hardy held a position of vantage. The crafty villain knew this, and it did not take him long to decide upon a move.

"We might as well cave, I guess Con," he said with affected resignation. "I suppose the other Brady ain't from here."

"I'll not do it," said Corcoran resolutely. "Lively Ann" was silent and very pale. It had been a shock to her.

"He's got us dead!" continued Hardy. "Put up your hands for the bracelets, Con!"

"Not by a jugful!"

Young King Brady was not deceived.

He drew a small whistle from his pocket with his disengaged hand.

On it he blew a shrill blast.

The Artful Trio only laughed.

"What's that for?" asked Corcoran scornfully. "There's no chance of that being heard in the street, and there is nobody in this house would give you a bit of assistance. You're off your trolley!"

Young King Brady only blew the whistle again, disregarding their comments.

He saw that it had the proper effect and just what he desired.

The bunco steerers looked furtively about and appeared to listen. It was plain that they were inclined to regard this as a signal to Old King Brady or some other colleague.

It, however, resulted in an action which Young King Brady had not anticipated.

Suddenly Hardy, swift as a flash, dodged back into the corridor. In that instant Young King Brady fired.

The bullet splintered the jam of the door against which Hardy had leaned. Then exciting things happened.

Corcoran gave the lamp a swift blow.

It was dashed to the floor and all was instant darkness. The young detective heard a skurrying of forms about him.

Then he tried in vain to clutch them.

But they eluded him.

He was baffled.

When he was at last able to light his own dark lantern and take a look about the bunco steerers were gone.

They had given him the slip in the most surprising manner.

To say that the young detective was chagrined would be a mild statement.

He was angry at himself.

And yet he reflected that the odds had been against him, and he had indeed been lucky to escape with his life.

In vain he searched the house for some trace of the fugitives.

It could not be found. They had made their escape good.

Defeated but not discouraged, Young King Brady found his way back into the street near Chatham Square.

It was now a late hour.

Young King Brady was just turning into Chatham Square when he heard cries and blows and the sounds of a struggle.

This was at the upper end of the Square, under the elevated railroad structure.

It was the same fracas which had attracted the attention of Old King Brady and had resulted in his pursuit of the Three Fleas.

Young King Brady reached the spot shortly after Old King Brady left.

The young detective, believing that the affair was connected with the case he was working on, took the trail.

He followed Old King Brady into the dingy courtyard and lost trace of him.

After a long search he finally thought of the roof.

At once he proceeded to climb the fire escape. Up he went until finally he reached the roof.

After a long search he found the rope ladder leading

down into the room where Old King Brady stood a chance of being done to death by his foes.

The reader is familiar with what followed. The Three Fleas were brought to the bar of justice in a summary fashion.

The two detectives kept dark after the affair which resulted in the capture of the three thugs.

They conferred in secret as to the next best plan to pursue.

It was extremely unfortunate that "Lively Ann" and her two colleagues had escaped the young detective.

Old King Brady, however, commended the younger detective upon his skilful ruse which had nearly resulted in bagging the game.

"I wish I had been there also!" he declared. "They would have been ours."

"That they would," agreed Young King Brady. "But I will not give them up yet. They have not yet left the country."

"They will try to do so!"

The two detectives exchanged glances.

"I heard Corcoran once speak of Italy," said Young King Brady. "We might try a line on the Italian steamers which come into New York."

So the two detectives began work with the assumption that the three bunco steerers would leave America at once by some foreign bound steamer.

They haunted the piers of all out-going steamers and inspected the passenger lists at the steamer offices.

Two days later Young King Brady found an entry on the steerage list of the Campania which at once interested him.

The names given were:

"Hans Schlatter."

"Gretel Schlatter."

"August Biel."

"Reading these names one would easily suppose the owners to be German emigrants returning to their native clime. But the keen detectives by careful questioning discovered the fact that the passage had been engaged by a tall, clerical man who was by no means a German, nor an immigrant.

"That was either Corcoran or Hardy—more likely the latter," said Young King Brady with conviction.

"We will be on hand when those German travelers go aboard," declared Old King Brady.

Finally the day set for the Campania to sail arrived.

The decks of the ocean liner were crowded and the gangplank was almost ready to be cast off.

Suddenly there appeared on the wharf three nondescript characters.

They were just about to step onto the steerage plank when an unexpected thing happened.

Two officers suddenly stepped from the throng and placed hands on the two men. The woman stood aghast.

"Simeon Hardy," said the taller of the two officers, "we arrest you for bunco steering and other crimes. Con Corcoran, you the same. And Ann Prentiss, do not attempt to escape; it is of no use."

For a moment there was profound silence.

The crowd stood by in amazement.

The three Germans looked stupid and stolid, and one of them said:

"Mein Gruss geschickt!"

"Nein!" asseverated the woman. "Ach you no understand. We go back to Shermanny all dot same nefer no more come back. Dot all right? Ach, Himmel!"

"Your German is not pure," said Old King Brady, with a smile. "I am afraid you'll not see Germany this trip."

The detective swept one arm over the head of the tall man. Off came the cap and blond wig, revealing a bullet head.

It was Simeon Hardy.

What followed was as swift as human thought.

Realizing that their game was up and their chance lost, Hardy had exchanged glances with Corcoran.

Quick as a flash of lightning he made a complete back somersault and cleared the edge of the wharf.

A great shout went up from the crowd, and they surged forward.

Corcoran had tried to do the same thing, but Young King Brady floored him and slipped manacles upon him.

He was quickly handcuffed to the Prentiss woman and she in turn handcuffed to an officer who came up.

Then all were interested in the fate of Hardy.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### "LIVELY ANN'S" TREACHERY.—THE END.

It looked as if the villain had leaped into the dock with suicidal intent. He could hardly have expected to escape in that manner.

Down into the water he went with a great splash.

For some moments he was lost sight of. Then a steamer hand ran out on the gang plank with a boat hook just as the villain's head bobbed above the surface.

The hook was inserted in his collar and he was drawn up onto the plank.

Ready hands seized him, and, dripping and gasping, he was pulled onto the wharf.

Explanations were made to the steamer officers and the three bunco steerers were closely handcuffed. The steamer cast off from the pier and started for Europe, but minus three steerage passengers.

It was with difficulty that the officers got them into a patrol wagon, and they were taken to headquarters.

Now that the game was up, they became tractable and confessed many things.

One day "Lively Ann" sent for Old King Brady to visit her in the Tombs.

As he approached her cell she broke down and wept bitterly. The detective came to the grating and said:

"What is the matter, Ann? What can I do for you?"

"Oh, Mr. Brady," she said brokenly, "it is awful to think of the end to which I have come. I was once a pure, inno-

cent girl and never dreamed that my life would turn out thus."

Old King Brady pitied her, as he had many others.

"It is too bad," he said sympathetically. "Perhaps for good conduct your sentence may be shortened."

But "Lively Ann" shook her head.

"I shall not live it out," she declared prophetically.

"So I am going to make to you a great confession."

It was not the first experience of the kind. He drew out his note book.

As he did so he bent nearer the grating.

Just in time his quick eye caught a glimmer. He dodged back.

Through the bar there had shot a long, keen dagger blade, held in the grip of the human tigress.

It barely missed his throat. Aghast, the old detective dropped his note book and stared at the woman.

In that instant her whole being had seemed to become transfigured. From her abject position of repentance and weeping she had changed to a cunning, leering evil-eyed, dark-souled murderess.

She hissed at her escaped victim like a veritable serpent.

She tore the prison bars feverishly and madly in the vain attempt to get at the man she hated so venomously.

"Heavens!" gasped Old King Brady. "Did you mean to kill me?"

"Kill you!" shrieked the insane woman. "Why should I not? You have balked me of my life's desire. You have blackened me forever. Another hour and I should have been upon the high sea, speeding to safety and another life. Think of it, you fiend!"

Old King Brady's narrow escape was miraculous. "Lively Ann" thereafter emulated her name most effectively.

She became one of the most obstinate and troublesome of prisoners. The strait-jacket was often her lot.

Con Corcoran died in Sing Sing of a lingering disease. The ill success of his plans was a bitter disappointment to him.

Simeon Hardy's career was a more varied one.

With three compatriots he one night made an escape from Sing Sing prison and swam out to a passing tow of canal boats.

The skipper of these welcomed the convicts and took them into his cabin for shelter.

Hardy requited this kindness by conspiring with his companions to render the canal boat captain hors du combat and rob him of his money.

So they overpowered him and his helpmate, cut the tow line and after tying both men in the cabin set the boat on fire and started to row ashore in a skiff.

But the tugboat crew gave chase and upset the skiff.

Two of the convicts were drowned, Hardy being one of them. And thus he ended his black career.

The two Bradys soon became absorbed in another case of mystery and crime, but they have not forgotten these details which have just been given the reader, of their great bluff hand, or the bunco game that failed to work.

The three Germans looked stupid and stolid, and one of them said:

"Mein Gruss geschickt!"

"Nein!" asseverated the woman. "Ach you no under-

cent girl and never dreamed that my life would turn out thus."

Old King Brady pitied her, as he had many others.

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